
DEBATE
ON THE
ABOLITION
OF THE
SLAVE - TRADE.

PRICE TWO SHILLINGS.

1538
149

Recd May 1, 1845

Gift of O. Rich Esq. of London

DEATH

ABOLITION

STAYE TRADE

THE END

THE
DEBATE
ON A
MOTION
FOR THE
ABOLITION
OF THE
SLAVE-TRADE,
IN THE
British Parliament
HOUSE OF COMMONS,
ON
MONDAY AND TUESDAY,
APRIL 18 AND 19, 1791,
REPORTED IN DETAIL.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED BY AND FOR W. WOODEFALL,
AND SOLD AT THE PRINTING-OFFICE OF THE DIARY,
SALISBURY-SQUARE, FLEET-STREET.

MDCXCXI.

THE

OF THE

OF THE

STREET

OF THE

OF THE

OF THE

OF THE

OF THE

OF THE

OF THE

OF THE

OF THE



REPORT OF THE DEBATE
ON A MOTION FOR THE
ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE,
IN THE
HOUSE OF COMMONS,
ON
MONDAY AND TUESDAY, APRIL 18 AND 19, 1791.

MR. WILBERFORCE rose, and after some prefatory observations, said, he did not know how others felt, but, for his own part, when he considered the infinite importance, and the vast extent, of the subject on which they were about to enter; when he took a view of the prodigious mass of information they had before them, he was prompted, both for his own sake and that of the House, to request some farther time for preparation; he waved this idea, however, in compliment to the Gentlemen most concerned in point of interest, who had expressed themselves strongly against another adjournment. He had also been in some degree influenced, by a regard to what he understood to be their wishes, in determining to bring forward the business in the shape of a general Motion, rather than in that of the Propositions which had been laid before the House in the last Parliament; but these Propositions, though not formally before them, would serve as a clue to direct the course of their enquiry.

It would equally exhaust his own strength, and the patience of his hearers, if he were to attempt to go at large into the discussion of the various particulars, which presented themselves to his mind; at present, therefore, he should do no more than just touch on the leading topics. He hoped Gentlemen would argue

the matter with him point by point, being sure that the more distinct and complete the discussion should be, the more clearly and irrefragably it would appear that truth and reason were on his side. He had long looked forward, he owned, to this day, with some degree of impatience, as what would afford him the opportunity of dispelling the prejudices, and correcting the misrepresentations which had gone forth; but besides that he had ever felt that this was the properest time and place for him to meet them, and to convince the world that in undertaking and persisting in his present pursuit, he had not been influenced by any unworthy feelings of a personal nature, he had also been determined to remain silent by another consideration: for though he had been sometimes a little roughly handled by anonymous assailants, it was a tribute of justice he gladly paid to some of those gentlemen, by whom he had been most strenuously opposed both on this and the other side of the Atlantic, to acknowledge that he had been treated by *them* with the utmost candour and liberality: these were proofs of the liberality of their minds, and highly gratifying to his own feelings; he hoped, also, he might draw from them a good omen to his cause, and derive a hope that, in the issue, they might all rejoice together in the happiness which would result from the success of it. In the same manner he wished to discuss the subject, frankly indeed, but with fairness and moderation; he called on the House to do the same, and said, he trusted that the present Debate, instead of exciting asperity and confirming prejudice, would tend to produce a general conviction of the truth of what, in fact, was incontrovertible, THAT THE ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE WAS INDISPENSIBLY REQUIRED OF THEM, NOT ONLY BY RELIGION AND MORALITY, BUT BY EVERY PRINCIPLE OF SOUND POLICY.—He concluded his opening by earnestly imploring the House to favour him with it's most serious attention on the most important question, on which a House of Commons had ever been called on to decide.

The first point, Mr. Wilberforce said, to which he wished to direct the attention of the Committee, was *the manner in which the Slaves were obtained on the Coast of AFRICA*. In order to be convinced of the truth of all his allegations on this head, it would

would be merely necessary to apply unquestionable principles of general reasoning to the particular circumstances of the case before them. That vast country was divided into various communities of different sizes, some governed by kings more or less absolute, others, and those the greater number, by elders. Their state of civilization was in general very imperfect, their notions of morality extremely rude, and the powers of their governments ill defined: it was natural therefore to imagine, that when the kings or chieftains should be tempted by the pressing solicitations of appetite to acts of injustice or oppression, they would not be slow to the commission of them; and temptations of this kind were continually held out to them by the European Traders: the effects of these were to be traced in every species of fraud and violence, whilst they, who ought to have been the guardians and protectors, were thus made the ravagers of their country. The same causes might be expected to produce the same consequences throughout the whole society; the seeds of disunion and disorder would every where be sown, every man would dread in a neighbour to meet with an enemy, and distrust and insecurity would universally prevail; the fountain of justice also would be poisoned, and be changed into a source of oppression. These speculations, founded on the principles of human nature and verified by the experience of all ages, accorded in all respects with the most authentic accounts that had heretofore been published of the Continent of Africa, which were now confirmed by a vast body of testimony of the most satisfactory and unexceptionable sort.

He begged the Committee would advert to the characters, situations, and means of information, of the witnesses, to whom he was now alluding: they were of various descriptions, some of them officers in his Majesty's service; others, men of science, who had visited the country from motives of curiosity; others again, who had themselves been concerned in the Slave Trade, and whose prejudices might have been supposed to be in favour of its continuance; several of them had possessed the most ample opportunities of intelligence; some had been many hundred miles up the rivers into the interior country. The testimony of these several witnesses embraced the whole of that vast

extent of country to which we resorted for the purchase of slaves, and from one end of it to the other, it established, beyond contradiction, the existence of those acts of fraud, oppression, rapine, and murder, which he had charged on the Slave Trade.

To begin with the River Senegal, the northern extremity of the district referred to, Captain Wilson and Captain Hills of his Majesty's Navy, and Mr. Dalrymple of the Land Service, being at the Island of Goree, had an opportunity of making observations in that quarter. On the arrival of the slave-ships, armed parties were regularly sent out in the evening, who scoured the neighbouring country, and brought in their prey in the night: these wretched victims were to be seen in the morning bound back to back in the huts on the shore, whence they were conveyed, tied hand and foot, on board the slave-ships. The object of these ravages, if it had wanted any confirmation, was established beyond a doubt by this circumstance, that when the Slave-Trade was stopped, the expeditions also ceased. Mr. Kiernan spoke of the constant depredations committed by the Moors, of which, as well as of such expeditions as had been mentioned by Captain Hills, the Committee heard also from Mr. Wadstrom, who had noted down, at the time, the transactions of every day in a journal which he had produced before the Committee, and whose curious and interesting relation, he could not doubt, had attracted the attention of every Gentleman who had looked into the evidence; and these ravages, excited by presents of brandy, gunpowder, and such other incentives, and by the conditional promise of larger supplies, were not only carried on by one community against another, but the kings were stimulated to commit them in their own territories, on their own subjects; and, in one instance, a chieftain, who, in the moments of intoxication, could not resist the pressing calls of appetite, had expressed, in an interval of reason, a due sense of the enormity of his own proceedings, and had poured forth his reproaches on his Christian seducers. Abundant also were the instances of private rapine: individuals were kidnapped whilst in their fields and in their gardens; there was an universal feeling of distrust and apprehension: the natives never went any distance from home without being armed, and when asked the rea-

son by Captain Wilson, pointed to a slave-ship then lying within sight. These transactions might be paralleled by others of a sort exactly similar throughout every part of the Slave-Coast; and he thought it perfectly unnecessary for him to trespass on the time and patience of Gentlemen, by attempting to enumerate them.

Pursuing their progress southward, they came to the Windward Coast; where, from the evidence of Lieutenant Story and Mr. Bowman, they would find all the fore-mentioned evils existing, if possible, in a still higher degree: they would see the remains of villages that had been burnt, whilst the fields of corn were still standing beside them, and every other trace of recent desolation. Here an agent was sent to establish a settlement in the interior country, and to send down to the ships such slaves as he might be able to obtain; the orders he received from his captain were a very model of conciseness and perspicuity; "*he was to encourage the chieftains by brandy and gunpowder to go to war and make slaves.*" He punctually performed his part, the chieftains were not backward in their's; the neighbouring villages were ransacked, being surrounded and set on fire in the night; their inhabitants were seized when making their escape, and being brought in to the agent, were by him forwarded, men, women, and children, to his principal on the coast. Mr. How, a botanist, who, in the service of government, visited that country with Captain Thompson, gave in evidence, that being at one of the subordinate settlements on the Gold Coast, on the arrival of an order for slaves from Cape Coast Castle, the native Chief immediately sent forth his armed parties, who, in the night, brought in a supply of all descriptions, and the necessary assortment was next day sent off according to the order. But Mr. Wilberforce would not tire the attention of the Committee; the whole extent of the African coast furnished but one dull, dry, uniform detail of similar instances of barbarity. There would be no end of multiplying particular cases, he would therefore only mention one or two more, less for their own sakes than for the conclusion that was to be drawn from them. When Captain Hills was in the River Gambia, happening accidentally to mention to a black pilot, who was in the boat with him, that he wanted
a cabin

a cabin-boy, the pilot told him he would soon obtain him one ; and, accordingly some youths being on the shore with vegetables to sell, he beckoned to them to come on board, at the same time by winks and significant gestures giving Captain Hills to understand that he might then take his choice ; and when Captain Hills rejected the proposal with indignation, the pilot seemed perfectly at a loss to account for his warmth, and dryly observed, that the Slave-Captains would not have been so scrupulous. There was, however, another transaction that he must distinctly state, not only on account of its enormous magnitude, but also because it established, beyond all controversy, the frequency of these acts of rapine, which was the conclusion he had before referred to. When General Rooke, a respectable Member of that House, was commanding in his Majesty's settlement at Goree, some of the subjects of a neighbouring king, with whom he was on terms of amity, had come to pay him a friendly visit ; there were from 100 to 150 of them, men, women, and children ; all was gaiety and merriment ; it was a scene to gladden the saddest, and to soften the hardest heart : but a Slave-Captain, ever faithful to the interests of his employers, is not so soon thrown off his guard ; with what astonishment would the Committee hear, that in the midst of this festivity, it was proposed to General Rooke to seize the whole of this unsuspecting multitude, hurry them on board the ships, and carry them off to the West Indies. Was there ever a man bold enough to venture on such a proposal ? Not one only, but three ! three English Slave-Captains preferred it as their joint request, alledging the precedent of a former Governor ! If in the annals of human wickedness an instance of fouler treachery were to be found, Mr. Wilberforce was happy to be ignorant of it. But it was not on account of its magnitude that he wished to impress it on the Committee, so much as because it was a pregnant proof of the frequency of the acts of rapine he had before described ; for what must be the habits of the Slave-Trade, what must have been *the familiarity* with scenes of depredation produced on the minds of the Slave-Captains, when three of them durst not only meditate within themselves, not only confer on with one another, but bring into the light of day, and carry to a

British Officer of rank, a proposal which one would have thought too horrid to be allowed for a single moment, even in the deepest retirement, in the darkest recesses of the most depraved heart. This would stand in the place of a thousand particular instances; This argued a foregone conclusion, and gave colour and credibility, if requisite, to every other act of violence stated in evidence before the Committee; he would therefore now confine himself to a proof or two of a circumstantial nature, a species of evidence which was frequently even more satisfactory than the most unexceptionable positive testimony. The Committee, perhaps, was not aware that the usual proportion of children on board the slave-ships on most parts of the coast was one-third of the whole cargo, and scarce ever less than one-fourth: on the Gold Coast the latter was the most ordinary proportion. It appeared from the evidence of one of their opponents' witnesses, who had resided there many years, that the only way in which children could be brought into that situation, was by whole families being sold when the principals were condemned for witchcraft, and at the same time it was said that the number of persons convicted of this crime was extremely small indeed, and that the younger part of a family in these cases was often spared; thus every *legal* avenue by which these poor creatures could be brought into the clutches of the Slave-Captains, was shut up by their opponents' own declarations; and irresistible confirmation was afforded to the positive testimony of the witnesses he had called, that in these very parts of the Coast the kidnapping of children very generally prevailed. But it was not only by acts of outrage that these poor creatures were brought into bondage, but, as he had said before, every other possible mode was resorted to, and in particular the administration of justice was turned into an engine for that end: the smallest crimes were punished by a fine equal to the value of one or more slaves, which, if the party was unable to pay, he was himself to be sold into slavery. Crimes were fabricated, false accusations and convictions were resorted to, and persons sometimes employed to seduce the unwary to the commission of crimes with a view to the conviction and sale of the culprit. It was another effect
of

of this trade, which he thought well worthy of being remarked on, that it corrupted the moral principle of those who carried it on; every possible fraud was put in practice to deceive the ignorance of the natives, by false weights and measures, adulterated commodities, and other impositions of a like sort: these were even acknowledged by many who had themselves practised them in obedience to the orders of their superiors. He enlarged a little on this topic, and called on all who were interested, for the honour of the mercantile character, to renounce and put an end to a traffic, which, ever faithful to its own character, was as contemptible for its meanness, as it was hateful for its cruelty. It was a circumstance by no means to be omitted, though he had failed to observe it in its proper place, that the Gentlemen of the West Indies acknowledged with great candour, that slaves were often obtained in the unwarrantable modes he had mentioned; he quoted the declaration of the Jamaica Committee, That the African trade was no trade of their's, and particularly specified Mr. Ottley, whose name he could never mention but with respect, declaring that this was not the language of compliment, but the sincere sentiment of his heart; he hoped also Governor Parry's letter, in which he spoke of the nefarious practice of the African trade, on which Mr. Wilberforce had enlarged on a former occasion, was still fresh in the memory of the Committee: but there was one authority of so respectable a description, that he should be highly wanting to his cause were he not to adduce it; it was the declaration of a Gentleman of great ability and information, as well as of uncommon candour and liberality of mind; the Committee would anticipate the name of Mr. Edwards: that Gentlemen, in a very eloquent speech delivered in the House of Assembly in Jamaica, against the Propositions moved by Mr. Wilberforce in the last Parliament, frankly expressed himself in the following terms; * "*I am persuaded, that Mr. Wilberforce has been very rightly informed as to the manner in which slaves are generally procured. The intelligence I have collected from my own negroes, abundantly confirms Mr. Wilberforce's account;*

* Page 13.

" and I have not the smallest doubt, that in Africa, the effects of
 " this trade are precisely such as he represents them to be. Sir,
 " the whole, or the greatest part, of that immense continent is a
 " field of warfare and desolation; a wilderness in which the in-
 " habitants are wolves towards each other. That this scene of
 " oppression, fraud, treachery, and blood, if not originally occa-
 " sioned, is IN PART (I will not say WHOLLY) upheld by the
 " Slave Trade, I dare not dispute. Every man in the Sugar
 " Islands may be convinced that it is so, who will enquire of any
 " African Negroes, on their first arrival, concerning the circum-
 " stance of their captivity. The assertion that a great many of
 " these are criminals and convicts, is mockery and insult."

Yet these things, however clearly proved by positive testi-
 mony, by the concession of opponents, by particular inference,
 by general reasoning, by the most authentic histories of Africa,
 by the experience of all countries and of all ages, these things,
 and even their possibility, were denied by many respectable per-
 sons, who have been brought forward on the present occasion,
 as evidence to support the continuance of the Slave Trade: they
 were chiefly persons who had been Governors of Forts in Af-
 rica, or who had long commanded ships in the Trade. So soon
 as he had known the description of the witnesses whom it was
 intended to call, Mr. Wilberforce had been prepared for the ef-
 fects of much prejudice. It was natural to imagine persons would
 be prepossessed in favour of the commerce they had been long
 carrying on, and perhaps their fathers before them; but all his
 apprehensions on this head had been greatly surpassed by the
 testimony they had given. He did not mean to impeach their
 private characters, but they certainly shewed themselves under
 the influence of such gross prejudices as to render them incom-
 petent judges of the subject they came forward to elucidate.
 They seemed, if he might so say, to be enveloped by a certain
 atmosphere of their own, and to see, as it were, through a
 kind of *African medium*; every object that met their eyes,
 came distorted and turned from its true direction. Even the
 declarations made by themselves, on other occasions, seemed
 wholly new and strange to them; they sometimes forgot not
 only what they had seen, but what they had said; and when to

one of them his own Testimony to the Privy Council was read, he mistook it for that of another Gentleman, whose evidence he declared to be "the merest burlesque in the world." They altogether denied kidnapping or village breaking, or the false imputation of delinquencies. It was not merely that they declared that they had never been themselves engaged in practices of this nature, which Mr. Wilberforce did not impute to them: they not only denied their actual existence, but their very *possibility*. It was curious to observe how this same habit, when once contracted, could stick by a man in another situation; and he was not sorry to have to exemplify it in the instance of a person whose private character he believed respectable. Mr. Barnes, since his return from Africa, had been engaged in the Wine Trade; and when examined a few years ago on the subject of the Wine Bill before the House, he made a declaration exactly parallel to what he has now said concerning the Slave Trade. "Will the proposed Bill tend in any degree to prevent the Adulteration of Wine?" "I do not see how it can, but with that I am unacquainted, as I know nothing of the adulteration of wine."—"I know nothing of kidnapping."—"I know nothing of the adulteration of wine."

But the House must be aware that there was not only an African medium, but an *African logic* too: it seemed to be an acknowledged maxim in the logic of Africa, that every person who offered a slave for sale had a right to sell him. However fraudulent the manner might be in which the broker had obtained the slave, if they paid him a just price for him, all was right, it was a perfectly fair *bona fide* transaction. This was not a charge brought by the witnesses for the Abolition merely, but was expressly and avowedly declared by many of the most experienced of the witnesses against it, and denied by none: "It would have stopped my trade," said one of them, "to have asked the broker how he came by the person he was offering me for sale." "We always suppose," said another, "the broker has a right to sell the person he offers us." "I never heard of such a question being asked," said a third, and in still stronger terms, "a man would be thought a fool that should put such a question." Mr. Wilberforce hoped the

4

House

House would be aware of the practical utility of this reasoning. It was the key-stone that held the whole building together. By the help of this convenient principle, a Slave-Captain might go up and down the whole Coast of Africa, and see nothing but equity and justice; and the African Committee, reposing on this grand maxim with perfect security, report gravely and formally that they had heard but of two instances of misconduct in the space of 40 years. The Slave-Captains, however, could not be altogether absolved, even by availing themselves to the full of this principle, excellent as it was; for depredations were frequently committed by the European Ships themselves, especially when they were passing by any part of the Coast where they did not mean to continue. Hence it was, that, as several Captains of the Navy, and others, had given in evidence, the Natives, who kept cautiously aloof from the Slave-Ships, would never come near the men of war, till fully satisfied they were not of the former description; after which they laid aside their fears, and came and continued on board with unsuspecting cheerfulness.

But Mr. Wilberforce would not detain the Committee any longer on this branch of the question, adding, let us withdraw from this disgraceful scene, and, in the words of an emphatic writer, "turn our eyes for relief to some ordinary wickedness."—But alas! no such relief was yet to be enjoyed by them: on the contrary, a still more dreadful scene was opening to their view; but he had described this part of the subject so much at large on a former occasion, that he would spare the Committee the pain of dwelling long on it now. Let them but represent to themselves a vessel, in a sultry climate, heaped to the very brim with these unhappy wretches, torn from their homes in the way he had described, and ignorant whither they were going. He scarce knew how to express himself; he could only say, he was persuaded that if the Committee could be transported where they might behold this dreadful spectacle, and after having taken a general survey of its multifarious wretchedness, if they were then to listen to each man's particular tale of sorrow, they would want no other argument for the Abolition. It appeared from the evidence, that in the year 1788, at the very moment

when they were agitating this subject within the Walls of Parliament, all those dreadful occurrences which he was describing, were actually going forward on board the Slave-Ships; the same dancing in fetters, the same singing, the same eating by compulsion, the same despair, the same insanity, and all the other abominations with which this Trade was characterized. New instances occurred, wherein these wretched men (eluding the vigilance of their persecutors, who, knowing what they had to expect, had provided against it by the usual high netting, that standing precaution of an African Ship) threw themselves into the Sea, and more than one, when in the act of drowning, were seen to wave their hands in triumph, exulting, to use the words of an eye-witness, "that they had *escaped*." Yet these things, viewed through that African medium he had already named, took a different shape and colour. It was said by an adverse witness, Captain Knox, that he had no doubt "Slaves lie, during the night, *in tolerable comfort*:" now considering that they were coupled in fetters, and were often suffering under a disorder; the effects of which were too nauseous for description, in order to correspond with the Committee's ideas of tolerable comfort, it might seem requisite that they should at least have room to lie on their backs: but how, in fact, were they sometimes accommodated? In one of Captain Knox's own voyages, in a vessel of 120 tons, he had 290 Slaves, and a space which, according to his account, would have held 43 more, being otherwise occupied, the whole might be said to contain 333; and with this proportion of men and tonnage, Captain Knox frankly declared, that perhaps they had not all the breadth of their backs. Yet, in another voyage, in a vessel of 108 tons, he carried 450; and in a third, of from 130 to 150 tons, he carried 600 Slaves; neither should it be forgotten, that the number of seamen being always increased in proportion to the Slaves, they also must have been more numerous in the two last voyages. What, in this situation, must have been the comfort of the Slaves, he left to the consideration and feelings of the Committee. Another instance of this African self-deception, was to be found on the records of the Committee, in the case of a Captain, of whom he had heard that he was one of the best

ever engaged in that Trade, and of whom Mr. Wilberforce did not doubt, that, in any other situation, he would have been alive to the feelings of humanity: it had been asserted, that he had held hot coals to the mouth of a Slave, in order to compel him to eat; but being questioned on the circumstance, not admitting, in the spirit of African logic, that *qui facit per alium facit per se*, he denied the charge with indignation. "I did not," said he, "and I defy any body to prove that I did." "Did you never order such a thing to be done?" "Being sick in my Cabin, the chief mate and surgeon, at different times, informed me that there was a man upon the main deck, that would neither eat, drink, nor speak: I desired them to use every means in their power to *persuade* him to speak, and assign reasons for his silence. I desired them to make some of the other Slaves endeavour to make him speak: when I was informed he still remained obstinate, and not knowing whether it was sulkiness or insanity, I *ordered* the chief mate, or surgeon, or both, to present him with a piece of fire in one hand, and a piece of yam in the other, and to *let me know what effect that had upon him*; it was reported to me, that he took the yam and eat it, and threw the fire overboard." This, said Mr. Wilberforce, is eating by *dureesse*, if any thing can be called so; the Captain, however, triumphs in the success of his expedient, and concludes his narrative by telling you that this very Slave was afterwards sold for 40*l.* at Grenada. Mark here the moral of the tale, and learn the nature and the cure of sulkiness.

Mr. Wilberforce next remarked, that if there could be any aggravation of the injuries inflicted by the Europeans, on the inhabitants of this devoted land, it was afforded by considering who they were that were so treated, and what was their situation in their own country. So long had he been conversant with the whole of this great subject, that on every part of it a crowd of ideas rushed into his mind; he would endeavour, however, so to select as to trespass for as short a time as possible on the patience of the Committee. One witness spoke of the acuteness of their capacities; another of the extent of their memory; a third of their genius for commerce; others of their good workmanship in gold, iron, and leather, the peculiarly excellent texture

of their cloth, and the beautiful and indelible tincture of the dyes; and it was acknowledged by all, that they supplied the ships with many articles of provision, with wood and water, and other necessaries; many spoke in high terms of their peaceable gentle dispositions, of their chearfulness, of their hospitality; even those who were nominally Slaves, lived a comfortable, happy life, were not liable to be punished but for crimes, nor to be sold without the form of a trial, nor in some parts without the verdict of a jury. When one of the opponents' witnesses is asked concerning their condition and treatment, he shews by his answer the impression made on his mind; he describes them as sitting and eating with their masters in the true style of patriarchal simplicity and comfort. Were these then a people incapable of complete civilization? It had been maintained, he knew, by some, that they were an inferior species; that they were even doomed by the Almighty to the sufferings they underwent, and that we were merely the instruments of the divine vengeance. To those who urge this argument seriously, it were not difficult to make a reply, though he acknowledged that the compatibility of natural and moral evil with the existence of an all-powerful, all-wise, and all-merciful Governor of the world, was a mystery beyond the reach of the human intellect. But in the mouths of those, who, instead of submitting with reluctance to the painful task of inflicting this punishment, courted and sued for the employment, and turned it to the purposes of their private interest, it seemed to him to deserve a very different treatment, and to be, indeed, nothing less than a gross and impious blasphemy.

Mr. Wilberforce observing now, on the whole of what he had stated, proceeded with saying, that he did not doubt of there being but one wish generally prevalent in the House, concerning the Abolition of the Slave-Trade. He was aware, however, an opinion had gone forth, that the measure would be attended with infallible ruin to the West India Islands. He trusted he should prove that the direct contrary was the truth; but this, he must say, was more than any one, on any principles, had a right to require. For his own part, he confessed, that considering the miseries this Trade entailed on Africa, his liberty of choice

choice was taken from him ; he must, at all events, determine for the Abolition ; but surely no man, however free he might deem himself to decide on grounds of expediency, would require more at his hands than that he should shew the measure would not be absolutely ruinous to the West Indies. No petty, no dubious interest would, by any one, be stated as a sufficient plea to justify the extensive and certain evils he had enumerated. He would not detain the Committee for a moment, in arguing against the bringing of new lands into cultivation, by fresh importations of African Slaves ; for even apart from every consideration of justice and humanity, the impolicy of the measure was indisputably clear. Let the Committee consider the dreadful mortality that attended the opening of new lands ; let them look to the evidence of Mr. Woolrich, and there see a contrast drawn between the slow, perhaps, but sure progress of cultivation, carried on in the natural way, and the attempt to force improvements, which, however flattering the prospect at first, soon produced a load of debt and inextricable embarrassments. He might even appeal to the enormous sum, said by the West Indians themselves to amount to more than 20,000,000*l*, owing to the people of this country ; and challenge them, on any principles, to contend that any new system would involve them so deep as that on which they had hitherto gone. But he would leave this head, referring the Committee to the evidence of Mr. Irving, a Gentleman, to whose abilities and merits the House and the Country were no strangers, one of the few men Mr. Wilberforce had known, who united great and accurate knowledge of detail, with a deep and comprehensive view of the general principles of the commercial system.—He called on the House at large, and particularly on any Gentlemen of the West Indies, who might be present, to listen to him calmly and dispassionately, and he was persuaded they would rejoice as much as he could do, if he were able to make out his point. The grand basis on which were bottomed all the objections of those who maintained the contrary opinion, he apprehended to be this, That the stock of Slaves now in the Islands, could not be kept up by propagation, but that it was necessary, from time to time, to recruit them with imported Africans. In direct refuta-

tion

tion of this position, he should prove; first, that in the condition and treatment of the Negroes, there were causes sufficient to afford us reason to expect a *considerable decrease*, particularly that *their increase had not been a serious object of attention*; secondly, that this decrease was, in fact, notwithstanding, very trifling, or rather, he believed, he might declare it had now actually ceased; and thirdly, he should urge many direct and collateral facts and arguments, constituting on the whole, an irresistible proof that even a *rapid increase* might henceforth be expected.

It was much to be lamented, he said, that on both sides this great subject had been treated in a manner by no means calculated to answer the purposes of a cool and deliberate enquiry; there had been too much warmth and acrimony. For his own part, he hoped he had always both thought and spoke with candour and moderation. In judging and speaking of the condition and treatment of Slaves in the West Indies, he had never adopted those indiscriminate censures, into which some had incautiously fallen. It would be in the highest degree unjust to the Gentlemen of the West Indies, not to observe this distinction, and a due regard to it would have tended to soften asperity, and even perhaps to have prevented much of the opposition they have given. In stating, as he was about to do, the leading circumstances of the condition of the Negroes, it would, however, be necessary to remark, That, whatever splendid instances there might be of good treatment, there were some evils of almost universal operation, such he meant as were necessarily connected with a system of Slavery. Above all, the state of degradation to which the Slaves were reduced, deserved to be noticed in this regard, and from which the worst consequences resulted in a thousand ways, both to their own comfort, and even to their masters' interests. Of this there could not be a more striking proof than the utter inattention to them as moral agents. It was not merely that they were *worked under the whip like cattle*; but no attempts were ever made to instruct them in the principles of religion and morality. This, together with the acknowledged neglect of any attempt to introduce regular marriage among them, applied directly to the question concerning
their

their increase, and tended to refute the notion of it's having been seriously attended to. The Gentlemen who asserted this, and who said they could point out nothing defective in the treatment of Slaves, had frankly confessed that their morals were utterly neglected, and that the best consequences might be expected to result from their being attended to; and how could it but be so, when, as was declared by these very same Gentlemen, promiscuous intercourse, early prostitution, and excessive indulgence in spirituous liquors, were material causes of their decrease? Indeed, the happy effects of instructing the Slaves in the principles of religion, had lately been experimentally proved, particularly in the Island of Antigua, where, under the teaching of the Moravians and Methodists, they had so far profited, that the Planters themselves confessed their value, as property, was increased one-third by their increased habits of regularity and industry.

Whatever might have been said to the contrary, it was plainly to be inferred, from the evidence, that the Slaves had not been under the protection of law. Colonial statutes had, indeed, in some cases, been passed, which might seem to afford them a sort of qualified protection; but, however ill treated by their masters, they had not been considered as having a right to any redress. A curious instance in point occurred to his recollection: it was contained in the evidence of Mr. Ross, a Gentleman, for whom he must be allowed to express sentiments of unfeigned respect and regard. There was something in the manner of his coming forward, to give his testimony, that reflected the highest honour on his character. Some of his nearest and most intimate connections were in the West Indian line; but when Mr. Wilberforce, without any previous acquaintance or introduction, called him forth to tell what he knew, he did not disregard the appeal, but stepped forward from a principle of duty which superseded all personal considerations. Mr. Ross mentions an instance of astonishing cruelty, committed by a Jew. It was but justice to add, that the man was held in detestation whenever the circumstance was told; but, though a matter of notoriety, it does not seem to have entered into the contemplation of any person, to call him to a *legal* account; and

Mr. Ross expressly declared, That he conceived a master had a right to punish his Slave, in whatever manner he might think proper. The same was declared by numberless other witnesses.

There would be no end of going into particulars. An assertion, however, was to be found to the contrary, and some records of convictions had been sent over as proofs of it. Mr. Wilberforce went into the particulars of these records, and refuted the conclusion they were meant to establish; particularly remarking, that the convictions were all of a very late date, and that in one of them, where a master had cruelly and wantonly cut the mouth of a child, of six years old, almost from ear to ear, so strange and so *novel* a doctrine did it appear to the jury, That a master was liable to punishment for any act of cruelty exercised on a Slave, that they brought in a conditional verdict, "*Guilty, subject to the opinion of the court, if immoderate correction of a Slave, by his master, be a crime indictable.*" The court determined in the affirmative; and what was the punishment of this abominable act of barbarity? A fine of 40 shillings currency, equivalent to about 25 shillings of our money!

The Slaves were but ill off in point of medical care; though that was an article wherein it might be expected there would be the least defect, when they were the property of affluent Planters, because it was that in which a prudent regard to interest, was the least likely to be counteracted by any sudden effects of passion. Sometimes 4 or 5, or even 8 or 9000 Slaves, were under the care of one medical man; which, dispersed on different and distant estates, were a greater number than he could properly attend to.

There was reason to believe the Slaves in general were under-fed: he might refer to the positive declarations to that effect contained in the evidence, and would confirm them by two or three additional arguments. The Slaves, in general, were supported partly by the produce of their own provision-ground, partly by an allowance from their Master of flour or grain. In those islands wherein the produce of the former were very trifling, owing to long and frequent droughts, their allowed food, instead of being proportionably greater, was actually less, than in other islands, where this produce was the most considerable.

derable. In one of the islands, where, we are told, provision-ground does not answer one year in three, it was from 5 to 9 *pints* per week : in Dominica, where these never failed, from 6 to 7 *quarts* ; and yet, even in the latter, it was universally remarked, that the Slaves were in far better health and spirits, during the five or six months of the crop or harvest season, notwithstanding the much harder labour of that period, owing to their being then somewhat better fed. It appeared, in the evidence of a respectable witness on the side of our opponents, that the utmost weekly allowance, generally given to a working Negro in Nevis and St. Christopher's, where there was no provision-ground, was but 11 pints; yet, in the Act of Assembly, lately passed in Jamaica, it is prescribed, That 21 pints shall be allowed weekly to every Slave confined in prison. In Nevis also, so long ago as the year 1717, the rate of food was fixed at a pound of meat or fish, and a pound of bread, daily. A prison allowance is not in general meant to be such as will pamper the body; yet how much does it here exceed that of the working Field Slaves in the old Leeward Islands?

It was easy to see how, in the several particulars he had been mentioning, the Slaves would feel the bad effects of their Masters' being embarrassed in their circumstances; whence would naturally result an abridgement of their food, with an increase of their labour: but this led him to the mention of a capital cause of the Negroes' sufferings, and consequent decrease. This was the non-residence of the Planters, many of them persons of affluent fortunes, of sound understandings, and liberal hearts; who, if they were on the spot, would attend to these poor creatures, and feel themselves bound, both by duty and inclination, to promote their happiness. But it was to no purpose to send out orders, of the execution of which they could know as little, as a king, who lived in his capital, could answer for what was carrying on in the most distant part of his dominions. Sir George Young and many others had said, they saw the Slaves treated in a manner they were sure their owners would have resented if it had been known to them. Mr. Orde spoke in the strongest terms on the misconduct of Managers; the very changes of them, which were confessed by almost all Planters,

were an irrefragable proof of it. The fact was, that in general they sought to establish their characters, which, as Mr. Ottley suggests, is generally determined by this consideration, *The producing large crops at a small immediate expence*, too little considering how far the Slaves might suffer from ill-treatment and excessive labour. Mr. Long had noticed, and severely condemned this practice; and *even the Managers themselves had acknowledged it to be their leading principle*. But, if from these causes, the Slaves were such grievous sufferers, even when they belonged to opulent and worthy men, what must their state be, subject to the severe exactions of *want* or *avarice*, and to the capricious cruelty of vulgar and unfeeling tyrants? The sad and humiliating effects were but too abundant in the pages of the evidence, and he had rather refer to them there, than undergo the painful task of reciting them.

But, in addition to all he had already said, concerning the causes which had prevented the keeping up the stock of Slaves by breeding, he must maintain, that it was incontestably proved that the object had never been seriously attended to. Here also he need only appeal to the testimony of the most respectable witnesses, who not only formed the opinion as an infallible conclusion from what they saw with their own eyes, but who *learnt it from the express declaration of the Managers and Overseers themselves*. But this was confirmed by the testimony of their opponents also. Mark the state of this controversy! The advocates for the Abolition alledged, that the increase of the produce was more attended to than the keeping up the stock: the reverse of the proposition was maintained by the Planters. Now it was natural to imagine, that men would be always best informed on those subjects with which their minds had been most conversant. Yet you find also, most universally, that the Owners and Managers, when asked about planting and the produce of their estates, are perfectly at home: when asked about their proportion of males and females, the number of infants, and other such particulars, they know little or nothing about the matter. Even medical men were perfect adepts in the art of planting; but when asked the latter questions, connected with
breeding

breeding and rearing, they seemed quite amazed, and could give no information.

In opposition, however, to his statement of the condition and treatment of the Negroes, many very respectable witnesses had been called, and, in particular, several persons who had served in the Islands in high professional situations. He knew what was due to their worth and characters; and he trusted, they would do him the justice not to think him guilty of the smallest degree of personal disrespect, whilst in the discharge of a duty, that was indispensable to the task he had undertaken, he should freely canvas their declarations. In the first place, he must enter a general protest against their testimony. He had formerly stated, that an Admiral's visit to a Plantation must make a holiday, and could afford no adequate idea of the general situation of the slaves. This, indeed, might reasonably be imagined; but the Committee was now told as much *by one of the party*. "I have often," says Mr. Ross, "had the honour
" of attending both Governors and Admirals upon tours in the
" Island of Jamaica; in the course of which, the estates gene-
" rally visited were belonging to Gentlemen of distinction,
" where we were entertained with every mark of respect, and
" whose estates in general might be considered in high order
" and good management; and it is not likely, even upon go-
" ing into the fields or works where the Negroes were em-
" ployed, but that attention would be paid by the white peo-
" ple and drivers, not to harrow up the feeling of strangers of
" distinction by the exercise of the whip, or the inflicting of
" punishments at that particular time; *and even if there were*
" *any disgusting objects, it is natural to suppose that they would*
" *be removed upon such occasions.*" In fact, these Gentlemen afforded many proofs of their being under the influence of pre-
judice. Two or three he would mention: they, many of them, declared that the Abolition would be ruinous to the West Indies. Now every person will acknowledge, that this must depend *upon the practicability of keeping up the stock, without African supplies*: yet, when asked as to this circumstance, their answer is, They know nothing about it. Hence it appeared, they had formed a conclusion without premises, a superstructure without

a foundation, which, of course, must fall to the ground. Another point worthy of remark was, that their evidence often extended through a long series of years. No defect, no ill treatment, is remarked, in any portion of the time, nor is there any distinction of periods. The Slaves are uniformly so well clothed, so well fed, so well treated, that nothing can exceed it: yet, almost in the same breath, you are told of their *amended* situation, and that they are now *far better off* than they were formerly. One of them, to whom his country is under high obligations, in proof that the Negroes enjoy the protection of laws, mentions a Master's having been sentenced to death for the murder of his own Slave: but the recollection of the respectable personage must surely have failed him here; for the fact is, that the murder of a Slave was not then a capital crime. But it was less extraordinary, that the noble person alluded to, should be mistaken on a subject not within his own Province, when others were misinformed on it, to whom it more immediately belonged. Of this there were repeated instances. A very respectable Governor being asked, Whether a Master was liable to be punished capitally for the murder of his own Slave, replied, "He never entertained a doubt of it himself, nor ever heard a doubt of it expressed by any sensible or reasonable man;" yet, had he looked into the Statute-book of his own Island, he would have found, that the wilful murder of a Slave was punishable only by a fine of about 180 £ sterling. This however was a heavier penalty than that inflicted by the Barbadoes law; for 15 £ sterling was there the amount of it. In fact, their opponents' witnesses, by attempting to prove too much, had proved nothing. The Slaves were said to be in a better state than the peasantry of this country, whom, to use the emphatic language of Mr. Ross, he would not "insult with a comparison;" and those very circumstances had been insisted on as proofs of the assertion, by which it was most palpably refuted.

It had been declared, also, that the Negroes were happier as Slaves, than if they were made free; and that, when made free, they never returned to Africa. There was scarce, perhaps, in the whole course of the business, a more striking proof of prejudice, than was afforded by the first of these assertions. He allowed

lowed that a Slave, who was industrious, and in a situation wherein he might, to advantage, dispose of any commodities he had been able to raise for sale, could annually lay by a little money, which Mr. Wilberforce was glad to have it to say, he believed, was never taken from him. When the savings of many years at length had accumulated to a considerable amount, how did they then dispose of it? With this sum, for which they had been struggling during the whole course of their lives, they went to their Masters and bought their freedom; they purchased their release from their situation of superior happiness, by the sacrifice of their last shilling! And there was scarce any instance mentioned of a Slave's possessing property, but you found the circumstance accompanied by that of his having thus employed it: or, when they thought the little that was left of their own lives not worth redeeming, they would purchase the freedom of a son, a brother, or a sister; thus affording at once a proof of the value they set on freedom, and of disinterestedness and social affection, that did honour to the human character. But the argument might be pushed still farther. It was not merely that the slaves themselves desired their freedom, ignorant perhaps of what might really contribute to their happiness, but it was by the gift of it that their Masters remunerated their long and faithful services, as the best reward with which they could be recompensed. Mr. Wilberforce would not so calumniate the West Indians, as to suppose they meant only to mock these poor people with a real evil, for an imaginary good; nor yet that they were mocked by the laws which held forth to them this boon of freedom, as the most valuable recompense they could receive. The dissatisfaction of the Slaves with their state of bondage would appear still more striking, when it should be considered, That they who bought their own freedom, in the manner he had above described, from the habits of industry, which were included in the very idea of acquiring so much property, were likely to have smarted less than ordinary under the whip of the driver; and that they must rather be supposed to be influenced by the evils of their present state, than by the sweets of that to which they aspire; for their freedom, when obtained, was still a state of unprotected degradation, liable, as sufficiently

ciently appeared by the evidence, to perpetual injury and insult.

With regard also to their not returning to Africa, this was an argument that could hardly be urged with seriousness. Sinking into years, perhaps, before they had saved enough to purchase freedom, and thus procure to themselves the opportunity, was it to be expected they should venture across the Atlantic? If they could even reach their homes in safety, all their kindred and connections would be now perhaps no more; and when, above all, they would reasonably apprehend they might once more be kidnapped, once more hurried on board a ship, and again be forced to endure, and again survive the horrors of the Middle Passage! But this love of their native country, and their desire to return to it, was proved beyond a doubt; many of the witnesses had heard them talk of it in terms of the strongest affection. The acts of suicide were frequent, which, under their mistaken notions, they committed as the readiest means of getting home, and under the same notion that, by death, they were restored to their native land. Captain Wilson assures us, that the funerals, which, in Africa, were accompanied with lamentations and cries of sorrow, were attended, in the West Indies, with every mark of exultation and joy.

Mr. Wilberforce added other observations, and trusted, on the whole, he had made good his first Proposition, That the causes of decrease were so many and so great, that this decrease might reasonably have been expected to be very considerable. In fact, however, in the Island of Jamaica, which, he conceived, he might take as a fair specimen of the whole, it was very trifling; or rather, he believed, he might assert, had entirely ceased some years ago, and that *the decrease was only on the imported Slaves*. He would not trouble the House at present with any thing more than the result of the calculations; but was ready to enter into the detail of them whenever he should be desired. In the Report of the Privy Council, they had the numbers imported, and the actually existing numbers during the last 90 years. From 1698 to 1730, a period of 32 years, the decrease appeared to be three and a half per cent; in the second period, from 1730 to 1755, the decrease was

was two and a half *per cent*; in the third period, from 1755 to 1768, it was lessened to one and three quarters; and from 1768, to 1788, at the utmost, it was not more than one *per cent*, which also must be ascribed in a great degree to an extraordinary series of hurricanes, and consequent famines, *leaving a loss that would be fully accounted for by the numbers of imported Africans who perished in the seasoning*, a cause of mortality which, it was evident, would cease with the importation. From this, and other considerations, he felt himself warranted to assert, that the Slaves in Jamaica were now actually increasing: nor need this surprise the Committee, for it was borne out by the positive testimony of Dr. Anderson, a physician of considerable eminence, who solemnly gave in evidence, two years ago, to the Assembly of Jamaica, after enumerating the causes of the mortality of Slaves, that, notwithstanding them all, he believed, that *there was a considerable increase on the properties of the Island, and particularly in the parish in which he resided.*

Mr. Wilberforce said, he would now proceed to fulfil his engagement, and bring forward such facts and reasonings as justified his persuasion, That the Slaves must henceforth be expected to increase, and that even rapidly. And, in the first place, he must draw a most important inference from the gradual lessening of the decrease which he had already stated; for, as this had uniformly kept pace with the melioration of the Slaves' treatment, so there was every reason to hope, that as this should be still mended, the decrease would continue to lessen in proportion. This expectation was put almost beyond a doubt by the following circumstance, That wherever any *one* of those causes, to which he had ascribed the decrease of Slaves, had been either wholly, or in a great degree, removed, the decrease appeared to have been stopped, though all the other causes continued in full operation. Thus, in the case of several of their opponents' witnesses, whenever the Gentleman examined had fed, or managed, or treated his Slaves better than ordinary, you were almost sure to hear, in the sequel, that he had kept up the number of his gang. Mr. Willock gave his Slaves an uncommonly large allowance of food, and their increase was accordingly. Mr. Otley, Sir Ralph Payne, and many others,

afforded also pleasing examples of a similar nature, and the instances of estates that appeared in the evidence to have kept up their numbers were very many, almost always to be accounted for from some circumstance of good treatment. In short, it would weary the Committee to enumerate the instances of plantations that are stated in the evidence to have kept up their numbers. A remedy had been lately found for a disorder by which vast numbers of infants had been formerly swept away. Mr. Long had laid it down, That whenever the Slaves should bear a certain proportion to the produce they might be expected to keep up their numbers, and this proportion they now exceeded. The Assembly of Jamaica had given it as their opinion "That when once the sexes shall become nearly equal in point of number, there was no reason to suppose that the increase of the Negroes, by generation, will fall short of the natural increase of the labouring poor of Great Britain." The Committee would be aware that the inequality, here spoken of, could only exist in the case of the *African* Negroes, of whom more males than females are imported. It was his decided opinion, for various reasons, with which at present he would not trouble the Committee, That the disproportion, even in this part of the Island stock, was by no means great, nor would he allow, for a moment, that it was such as could counteract the natural course of population. In this he was certainly confirmed by Dr. Anderson, who gave no hint to the Committee, that, in the parish wherein he resided, one of the largest in Jamaica, the males and females were in any other than the ordinary proportion, nor even that any more than common attention was paid to the Slaves; yet there, he said, of his own knowledge, they were increasing. Nor should it be objected, that several persons of undoubted credit had stated, that they had in vain endeavoured to keep up their gangs without purchase; for, if this argument were to be deemed conclusive, it might be proved that the people of this, and of every other country, were rapidly decreasing. Should an enquiry on that head be carrying forward, many individuals might come and declare, that their families had been swept away by consumption, fever, or some contagious disorder, in spite of the most watchful care, and the

best medical assistance: all this might be very true, but it would afford no fair inference as to the general.

But to proceed to the facts which must confirm the hopes of the Committee beyond the possibility of doubting, without stopping to insist on what was universally acknowledged, that the Negroes were a very prolific people in their own country, he must point the Committee's attention to the Continent of America: there it would be found, that the Slaves had increased at a rate that was truly astonishing, in one instance from 200 to 500 in the space of about 30 years. From one end of the Continent to the other, this increase was undeniably established; though the climate was far more unfavourable than that of the West Indies to the constitutions of the Negroes, who not only had to contend with the severity of cold in the winter, but in some parts with noxious exhalations in the summer, from which the white inhabitants fled to the towns as from a pestilence. The only observable distinction was, that they were much better fed, and, in some places, more domesticated; yet these circumstances produced the difference he had mentioned, though so powerfully counteracted by an unfavourable climate.

He should next direct their eye to another part of the world, where, as if to show that there could be no situation in which these people would not keep up their numbers, they would be found to have done so at a place the most unhealthy, he believed, in the habitable world. He spoke of the settlement of Bencoolen, where it appeared, from the evidence of Mr. Botham, a number of Negroes, who had been imported in the same disproportion of sexes that is in the West India cargoes, and under the same disadvantages, as in the Islands, of promiscuous intercourse and general prostitution, after they had been settled a short time, began annually to increase.

But the West Indies themselves would furnish a still more remarkable instance; about the beginning of this century an African ship was wrecked upon the Island of St. Vincent. The number of Negroes that escaped is not known. It was to be supposed the disproportion of the sexes was at least as great as in the cargoes at this day. They had every difficulty to con-

tend with, were wholly unprovided with necessaries, and were obliged to maintain a constant war with the native Caribbs; yet they had soon multiplied to an astonishing number, and Mr. Ottley declares, he believes them still to be on the increase, precluding, at the same time, a way of accounting for it, which had been somewhere suggested, by adding, as he has heard and believes, They never permit the run-away Slaves to incorporate with them, and that they have a peculiar mark produced by flattening the forehead in infancy, by which they are readily distinguished from all other Negroes.

This is not all : it appeared, from Sir John Dalling's evidence, that the domestic Slaves in Jamaica increased, and, from the writings of Mr. Long, that there was an increase among the free Blacks and Mulattoes. But Mr. Wilberforce was, however, aware one instance of a contrary nature would be brought forward, contained in the evidence of Sir Archibald Campbell, whose name he could not mention, without expressing regret for his recent loss, in common with many other Members of that House. That Gentleman had informed the Committee, he had heard that the Maroons in Jamaica, had in 1739, amounted to 3000 men fit to carry arms, which Mr. Wilberforce need not inform the Committee, supposes the whole number about 12,000; but that, in the year 1782, after every possible exertion, to get all their fighting men to turn out to defend the Island against the French and Spaniards, he found, to his great astonishment, that the fighting men did not then amount to 300. Sir Archibald added, that he understood they were decreasing daily : nor was this surprising, considering they had a free access to spirits, of which they are remarkably fond, and that they often cohabited with the women of the neighbouring Plantations, and consequently were not recruited, in these instances, by the addition of their own progeny. It is true, some of the witnesses, in favour of the Abolition, had said they believed these Maroons increased; but their opinion would hardly be received in contradiction to Sir Archibald Campbell's, and the reasons by which it is supported.

But what, added Mr. Wilberforce, would the Committee say, when he should prove decisively, that these very people, from

The

the actual enumerations of two different periods, had doubled their number in two and thirty years? About the year 1733, it was declared, in an act of the Jamaica Assembly, That, notwithstanding every effort made against them, they still increased upon their hands. A long and bloody war succeeded, and they were so greatly reduced that, whatever their numbers might have been in 1739, which Sir Archibald Campbell seems to state only from popular rumour, they were, according to Mr. Long, actually numbered in 1749, when they amounted to about 660 in all, having 150 men fit to carry arms. These, we find, from Sir Archibald Campbell's actual muster in 1782, had increased to near 300 of the same description, which gives 1200 in the whole; and the account is confirmed by an intermediate return of 1770, contained in the Privy Council's Report, when they were just so far in their way to the last mentioned number as you would expect to find them, being 216 men fit to carry arms, and in the whole 885. Nor ought it to be forgotten that, in 1749, the proportion of men to women was nearly four to three, a greater inequality than the opponents stated, and much more than he acknowledged to exist among the Slaves in Jamaica.

Mr. Wilberforce apologized for having dwelt so long on this branch of the argument; but it was that which was more important than all others, considering the question in a political view; and, though he could never, for a moment, allow himself to remain under the imputation of forming his own decision on grounds of policy, yet he held it an essential duty, in his situation, to do his best to quiet the apprehensions of the Planters, and to convince them that the Abolition of the Slave-Trade, indispensable on every principle of religion and humanity, would not be injurious to their interests. After all he had said, was there any one so confirmed in prejudice as to maintain that the Negroes would not keep up their numbers, if this were made, in any degree, a subject of attention? The reverse was proved by sound reasoning. It was confirmed by unquestionable facts. In their native country, the Negroes were prolific to such a degree, that by one of our opponents it has been said, that they could continually throw off fresh swarms, without feeling

feeling the loss of them. In America, through all her provinces, they had increased; they had increased also in Bencoolen; the Caribbs had increased in St. Vincent's, and the Maroons in Jamaica; the free Blacks and Mulattoes increase; the domestic Slaves increase; Dr. Anderson attests, the Field-Slaves themselves increase, and multitudes of particular instances of increase are stated in the evidence. The decrease is stated to be trifling, though no attention appears to have been paid to the subject. *That* decrease has been gradually lessening, and whenever a *single* cause of it has been removed, many still remaining, it has altogether ceased. Surely, said Mr. Wilberforce, this forms, on the whole, a body of proof which is utterly irresistible.

Wr. Wilberforce now proceeded to treat of the consequences of the Abolition in other views; on which he said, he would be as brief as possible. And first, as to its effect on the Marine. He had uniformly asserted, that it was the grave, rather than the nursery, of seamen; he knew, he could rely on the fidelity and accuracy of the Gentleman, by whom this subject had been investigated; but if his statements had wanted any authentication, they were confirmed beyond a doubt, by an Abstract just laid before the House, of the Liverpool and Bristol Muster-Rolls. From these it would appear, That, in 350 Slave-vessels, having on board 12,263 persons, 2643 were lost in twelve months; whereas, in 462 West India-men, having on board 7640 persons, 118 only were lost in seven months. This fully equalled, or rather exceeded, the losses stated by Mr. Clarkson. There was no part of this whole subject on which the Committee had a more complete body of evidence than on this. Lord Rodney himself declared, "The Slave-Trade is certainly not a nursery for seamen." Governor Parry's Letter, from Barbadoes, would never, he hoped, be forgotten. The evidence of Mr. Ross was clear on this point; and Mr. Edwards himself, whilst with justice he complimented his countrymen on their humanity to the abject seamen who were left in Jamaica, showed, at least, that they were so left. Sir George Young and Captain Thompson were very copious here, and decisive as to the general ill treatment of the crews of Guinea-men, of which, however, the single fact of their always wishing

to quit their ships for a Man of war, whilst the direct contrary happens in every other trade, was a more conclusive proof than the multitude of particular instances of ill-treatment he had it in his power to adduce. The instance of Captain Hall was very remarkable, who, being in the Impress Service in the West Indies, at a time when seamen were extremely wanted, not for active service only, but to send home the prizes that had been taken on the 12th of April, having brought off 30 hands, whom he selected with care from a crew of 70, was reprimanded by his Admiral for introducing such wretches into the fleet, who were likely rather to weaken its strength, by communicating infectious disorders, than to render it any service. Nor was it only to the constitutions of sailors that this trade was injurious; it debased also and degraded their moral character. Captain Smith had declared, that "When employed to board Guinea-men for the purpose of impressing men, although he had boarded perhaps near 20 vessels, he never was able to get more than two men, and these turned out such cruel inhuman fellows, that, although good seamen, he was under a necessity of dismissing them the ship." But one of the most disgraceful illustrations of this charge, was contained in the evidence of Mr. Ross, who, having declared that his mind furnished him with a recollection of a great number of instances, wherein the Slave-Trade had been productive of great destruction and misery to the human race, both blacks and whites, stated the fact to which Mr. Wilberforce had been referring, marked, as he observed, with peculiar circumstances of horror! An African ship had struck on some shoals, called the Morant Keys, a few leagues from the east end of Jamaica. The officers and seamen landed in their boats, carrying with them arms and provision, *leaving the Slaves on board in their irons and shackles.* This happened in the night! When morning came, it was discovered the Negroes had got out of their irons, and, shame to the Europeans! not satisfied with saving themselves only, were busy making rafts, upon which they placed the women and children, the men, and others capable of swimming, attending on them, whilst they drifted before the wind towards the Island where the seamen had landed. The minds of these, if, by the

habits of the Slave-Trade, they had not become hardened against every feeling of humanity, must have been moved by so interesting a scene: they would have been eager to repair their former cruel neglect, and to lend them, though late, their best assistance. But what was indeed the sequel? "From an apprehension that the Negroes would consume the water and provision which they had landed, they came to a resolution to destroy the Negroes, by means of their fire arms and other weapons, and as the poor wretches approached the shore, they actually destroyed between 3 and 400! Out of the whole cargo, only 33 or 34 were saved, and brought to Kingston, where they were sold at public vendue." It is the *charitable conjecture* of Mr. Ross, that they were in a state of intoxication, when they adopted the above-mentioned resolution, without having first made an attempt to dispatch their boat to Jamaica for assistance, or a vessel to take them and the Slaves off the Island; adding his persuasion, that, if they had acted with common discretion, there was no necessity for destroying one of them. But this, there was but too much reason to fear, was a supposition more of charity than justice; for there appeared no want of coolness and discretion, in the precautions they took for their own safety. It would, however, be to no purpose, Mr. Wilberforce added, to relieve the Slave-Trade from this act of barbarity; the story of the Morant Keys was but paralleled by that of Captain Collingwood, and were you to get rid of these, another, and another, would still present itself.

The volume of evidence, which lay before him, was filled with accounts of different kinds of miseries. His feelings were too powerfully worked on to allow him to stop; and he must shut up the book at once, or he must read the whole. Whilst he had been just reading to them the story of the Morant Keys, his eye had but glanced on the opposite page, and it met another circumstance of horror attending this trade, which had escaped him in its proper place. It related to what were called the "Refuse Slaves;" what was signified by this term, he could not better explain to the Committee than by reading to them some words from Mr. Ross. After saying there were, in the Town of Kingston, a number of people who speculated in the purchase

purchase of the Slaves, left after the first day's sale, for the purpose of carrying them to the country and retailing them. He proceeded to declare, that he " had frequently seen the very Refuse " of the Slaves of Guinea ships, landed and carried to the " Vendue-master in a very wretched state, sometimes in the " agonies of death, and there sold at very small prices, *even as* " *low as a dollar, and that he had known instances of their ex-* " *piring in the Piazzas of the Vendue-master.*" The bare description superseded the necessity of any remark : *yet these are the familiar incidents of the Slave-Trade !*

But there were other fatalities to which seamen, in this trade, were peculiarly liable. In the course of his enquiries, it had occurred to him, to look into the list that was kept at Lloyd's, of the casualties that befel our shipping, and thence he soon collected the account, contained in the book he held in his hand, where, in some years, it appeared one, in others two, and in others three, and in one as many as six, ships were cut off by the natives, or destroyed in some other manner. Such articles as these were every where to be met with : in short, the history of this commerce was written throughout, in characters of blood.

Mr. Wilberforce said, he should next consider the effects of the Abolition of the Slave-Trade on those places by which it was most carried on. He alluded to Bristol and Liverpool, particularly the latter, of whose commerce it had been usually thought to constitute a considerable share. Long might she be rich and flourishing, provided it was by fair and honest gains ; and he was happy in being able to say, that it was not by this detestable traffic, that she had risen to her present opulence ; and that, not only because it composed but a thirtieth part of her export trade, but also because, from private information, as well as public documents, he was authorised to say, it was merely a lottery—profitable, indeed, to some individuals, but a losing trade on the whole. The Delegates from Liverpool had declared, at the Bar of the House, that, in order to give the Merchants a profit, he must be allowed to carry a greater number of Slaves, in proportion to his tonnage, than he was permitted by the existing law ; and, in the accounts, contained in the papers

on the table, of the tonnage of ships, and the number of Slaves they carried, the cargoes of a great part of them would be found to be below that proportion.

Of the commerce of Bristol, the Slave-Trade constituted a still smaller proportion. For the effects of the Abolition, on the general commerce and on the manufactures of Great Britain, he would refer the Committee, once more, to the evidence of Mr. Irving, where they would find that the benefits of its continuance, in these views, had been extremely exaggerated. The medium value of British manufactures, exported to Africa, amounted but to between four and five hundred thousand pounds a year, and there was no doubt, but that the superior capital, ingenuity, industry, and integrity, of the British manufacturer, would command new markets for the produce of his industry, when *this* should be no more : but he should advert hereafter to this subject. He might have been warranted to call our exports to Africa, a trifle, considering that the value of British manufactures, of late exported from this country, exceeds that of the most flourishing period before the last war, in the sum of 2,500,000*l.* One branch, indeed, of our manufactures, he must confess, was likely to suffer from the Abolition, and that was the manufacture of *Gun-powder*, of which the nature of our connection with Africa, drew from us as much as we exported to all the rest of the world besides.

He hastened, however, to another part of the argument, on which it would be necessary for him to take up more of the time of the House. By many persons it had been said to him, "We wish, as earnestly as you can do, to put an end to the Slave-Trade, but we cannot approve of your mode. Allow it to be carried on for some time longer ; for, by a hasty Abolition, you will displease the Legislatures of the West India Islands, on whom you must, in fact, depend for such a melioration of the Slaves' condition, as, by ensuring the keeping up of the numbers, will prevent the necessity of importation. It is, by them, the laws must be passed for the protection of Slaves, and it is, by the Magistrates and others in the Islands, that these laws must be enforced." Now, said Mr. Wilberforce, I am directly at issue with these Gentlemen ; and though the effects of the
Slave-

Slave-Trade on Africa, were not such as to preclude every idea of regulation, I should be decidedly of opinion, that the Abolition was to be recommended as the best, and indeed the only certain, mode of so far amending the treatment of Slaves in the West Indies, as to secure their increase; adding, that he trusted he should prove that the mode preferred by these Gentlemen was at once inefficacious and unsafe. In order to prove the inefficacy of any laws that might be passed for securing good treatment to the Slaves, it would be sufficient to acquaint the House, if they were not already aware of it, that *The evidence of Negroes is, in no case, admitted against white men.* The consequences of this would be obvious, when it should be considered, that there were seldom more than one or two white men on a Plantation; and, in the language of the Grenada Answer, that "Those who were capable of the guilt in question, will, in general, be artful enough to prevent any but Slaves being witnesses of the fact." Hence it had arisen, that when positive laws had been made, in some of the Islands, for the protection of the Slaves, they had been found almost a dead letter, as was abundantly proved in the evidence before them. But, granting it were possible, by positive laws, to protect the Slaves, from the extremes of ill usage, from murder and mutilation, by what laws could they hope to *enter into every man's domestic concerns, and regulate the interior oeconomy of his House and Plantation?* This would be something more than a general excise, and what never could, or would, be borne by freemen. Yet on all these, and innumerable other minutenesses, must depend the comfort of the Slaves' situation, and the probability of their increase. A new system, indeed, had been attempted to be introduced, by which individuals, under the name of Guardians, were, by turns, to attend to carrying the laws into execution; but all this machinery would be to no purpose; and so long as it continued in action, it would make every man a spy upon his neighbour's conduct: it would poison the comforts of domestic life, and destroy the confidence of social intercourse. Would any one, therefore, conceive it possible, that it should prove efficient, or, if so, that it could long continue in operation? But it would be concealing too much to admit, that,

even in greater matters, *the laws* would be effectual. It was universally allowed, that the regulations of the *Code Noir*, however excellent, had been utterly neglected in the French West India Islands, though there was an officer appointed by the Crown, for the express purpose of seeing them enforced. The provisions of the *Directoria* had been but of little more avail in the Portuguese Settlements, nor the institution of a *Protector of the Indians* in those of the Spaniards. This lesson of the futility of Slave-Laws, was so experimentally inculcated on the spot, that many, in the Islands, ascribed the Bills that had been lately passed, to a disposition to blind the people of this country, rather than to any serious expectation of being able to carry them into execution. Mr. Wilberforce, for his own part, sincerely disclaimed any such opinion; on the contrary, he gave ample credit to many of those who had an active share in bringing them forward; and, in particular, he had read, with pleasure, the language on that subject, of a Gentleman to whom he had before had occasion to allude. But after all their regulations, what degree of protection the Slaves would enjoy, might be inferred from the admission of the Gentleman by whom this very plan had been recommended; no ordinary man, but a person of discernment and legal resources. He had proposed a limitation of the number of lashes, to be given by the master or overseer, for one offence; but when asked, "Can you suggest any mode by which the master can be brought to punishment, even if he should give the Slave ever so great a number of lashes, in a short space of time, screening himself under the artifice of splitting one crime into many, and giving the limited number of lashes for each?" he frankly replied, "I can devise none, while the evidence of Slaves continues inadmissible against their Masters." After this, who would maintain, that the treatment of Slaves by their Masters could be made subject to the regulations of the law? The artifice suggested before, was not an ideal one: they who had read the evidence, would recollect a disgusting instance of it recorded by Captain Cooke; wherein an inhuman wretch, in Barbadoes, had chained a Negro Girl, of about nineteen, to the floor, and flogged her till she was nearly expiring, with

with agony and loss of blood. After he had retreated to avoid the effects of the resentment so shocking a sight naturally kindled in persons unused to such scenes, he cried out with exultation, " I have only given her 39 lashes [*the number prescribed by law*] " at any one time, and *that* I have only given her three times, " since the beginning of the night ;" adding, " that he would flog her to death for all any one, and would have given her " the fourth 39 before morning ?"

But, he must repeat it, This plan of amending the situation of the Slaves, and securing their good treatment by laws, was not inefficacious only, but *unsafe*. He entered his protest against the fatal consequences that might result from it, and called on those who were most immediately interested in the question, to lend their serious attention to his argument. The Negroes, he said, were creatures like ourselves : they had the same feelings, and even stronger affections than our own ; but their minds were uninformed, and their moral characters were altogether debased. Men, in this state, were almost incapacitated for the reception of civil rights. In order to become fit for the enjoyment of these, they must, in some measure, be restored to that level from which they had been so unjustly and cruelly degraded. To give them a power of appealing to the laws, would be to awaken in them a sense of the dignity of their nature. The first return of life after a swoon, was commonly a convulsion, dangerous, at once, to the party himself, and to all around him. Such, in the case of the Slaves, Mr. Wilberforce feared might be the consequence of a sudden communication of the consciousness of civil rights. This was a feeling it would be dangerous to impart, till you should release them from such humiliating and ignominious distinctions, as, with that consciousness, they would never endure. You must conduct them to the situation in question, having first prepared them for it, and not bring the situation to them. To be under the protection of law, was, in fact, to be a freeman ; and, to unite slavery and freedom, in one condition, was a vain attempt : they were, in truth, incompatible, and could never be brought to coalesce. With this system, which he thus condemned, he wished to contrast the Abolition, which was exactly such an agent, if he might

might so express himself, as the nature of the case required. All hopes of supplies from the Coast being cut off, Breeding would henceforth become, what it had never been before, a serious and general object of attention, the effects of which would not be confined merely to those greater articles of better feeding and milder discipline, but would extend to innumerable other particulars, which an Act of Assembly could neither specify nor enforce. Whatever might be said to the contrary, or, whatever might have prevailed in the case of liberal or opulent men, it was plain *Too many had gone upon the system of working out their Slaves in a few years, and recruiting their gangs with imported Africans.* The Abolition would give the death blow to this system. The opposite one, with all its charities, would force itself on the most contracted and unfeeling heart. Ruin would stare a man in the face, if he did not conform to it. The sense of interest, so much talked of, would not, as heretofore, be a remote, a feeble, or even a dubious impulse; but a call so pressing, loud and clear, that its voice would be irresistible. But its grand excellence was, that it would stand between the absentee Master and his Slaves, and secure to them the effects of his benevolent intentions. Managers would henceforth be forced to make Breeding the prime object of their attention; and every non-resident Owner would express himself in the terms of Sir Philip Gibbs, "That he should consider it as the fault of the Manager, if he did not keep up the numbers." This reasoning, concerning the dangerous tendency of the one system, and the happy consequences of the other, appeared to Mr. Wilberforce almost self-evident. Facts were not wanting, however, to confirm the truth of it. It had been remarked by the Historian of Jamaica, that insurrections almost always owed their rise to the *African Slaves*, who, not having lost the consciousness of civil rights, which they had enjoyed in their own country, could not brook the indignities to which they were subjected in the West Indies. The effects broke out in general rebellions, or appeared in particular acts of suicide, of which last, though frequent among the African Negroes, he did not recollect to have ever heard of a single instance among the Creoles. The safety of his system had been

been tried already, in this relation; for it was universally agreed, That the treatment of the Slaves had been gradually growing better, and insurrections had been less frequent in the same proportion. An instance, in point, was afforded by what had lately taken place, in the Island of Dominica. It was notorious, indeed, that the disturbance had chiefly arisen from some runaway Slaves from the French Islands; a circumstance which, it appeared from the Report of the Privy Council, had produced the same consequences several years before: but so far as any cause connected with treatment was concerned, what was that cause, and what was the object on which the dissatisfaction of the Slaves was said to have fastened? What, but that they were not allowed the full time of recess from labour to which they had a legal right? And the quieting effects of mild treatment appeared in this, that the Slaves of some persons who had been treated with kindness, were not among the number of the insurgents. He could not help adding, that he thought his doctrine, That the Slaves must owe their comforts to the Masters' indulgence, rather than to the protection of law, had been, in a considerable degree, sanctioned and verified, even in the Island of Jamaica; for all the laws for the protection of Slaves, which had been formed into one consolidated act, having expired in 1784, and the Assembly, owing, as was alledged, to "pressing business," not having revived it till 1787, *during that whole period of three years the Slaves were altogether destitute of the protection of all these, so much boasted, statutes; and yet we do not hear that they were, in any degree, better or worse off than when these continued in force.*

But when Gentlemen coolly talked of putting an end to the Slave Trade, through the medium of the West India Legislatures, and of gradual Abolition, by the means of regulations, they surely forgot the Continent of Africa, and the miseries which this horrid traffic occasioned there, during every moment of its being allowed to continue. This consideration was conclusive on his conduct, when called on to decide, Whether the Slave Trade should be tolerated for a while, or immediately put an end to. The Divine Law against Murder was absolute and unqualified, and precluded, with him, every consideration of expediency.

expediency. Whilst, said he, we were ignorant of all these things, our suffering them to continue, might, in some measure, be pardoned; but now, when our eyes are opened, can we tolerate them for a moment, much less sanction them, unless we are ready at once to determine, that gain shall be our god, and, like the heathens of old, are prepared to offer up human victims at the shrine of our idolatry?

This consideration precluded also the giving heed, for an instant, to another plea which had been often urged and insisted on, That, if Great Britain were to abolish this Trade, it would be proportionably taken up by other nations; for he must add, that he could by no means conceive that this was likely to be the case. If, in this country, where the means of information were so generally diffused, the evils of this detested commerce were never before laid open to the view, what wonder if, in other countries, where these means are extremely deficient, these evils also were unknown? And was it fair to infer, from edicts and proclamations encouraging the Trade, that were passed in this state of ignorance, that they would not, at once, revoke them, when their eyes should be fully opened to it's enormities? He would not so vilify and calumniate the character of other nations, as, even for a moment, to give place to the contrary supposition.

But it became Great Britain, in every view, to take a forward part. *One half* of this guilty commerce had been carried on by her subjects.---As we had been great in our crime, let us be early in our repentance. If the bounty of Providence had showered it's blessings on us in unparalleled abundance, let us show ourselves grateful, as we ought, for the blessings we enjoyed, by rendering them subservient to those purposes for which they were intended. *There would be a day of retribution, wherein we should have to give an account of all those talents, and faculties, and opportunities, with which we had been intrusted.* Let it not then appear, that our superior power had been employed to oppress our fellow-creatures, and our superior light to darken the Creation of God.---He could not but look forward, with delight, to the happy prospects that opened themselves to his view in Africa, from the Abolition of the Slave Trade, when

a Commerce, justly deserving the name of Commerce, should be established with her, not like that, falsely so called, which now subsisted, and which all who are interested for the honour of the commercial character, though there were no superior principle, should hasten to disavow. Had this trade, indeed, been ever so profitable, his decision would have been in no degree affected by that consideration. "*Here's the smell of blood on the hand still, and all the perfumes of Arabia cannot sweeten it.*"

He doubted whether it was not almost an act of unbecoming condescension to stoop to discuss the question in the view of commercial interest. On this ground, however, he was no less strong than on every other. Africa abounded in many productions of value, which she would gladly exchange for our manufactures, when these were not otherwise to be obtained: and, to what an extent her demand might then grow, exceeded almost the powers of computation to appretiate. One instance already existed of a native king, who being, by his religion, debarred the use of spirituous liquors, and therefore not feeling the irresistible temptation to acts of rapine, which they afforded to his countrymen, had abolished the Slave-Trade, throughout all his dominions, and was encouraging the arts of honest and bloodless industry.

For his own part, he proceeded to declare, That interested as he might be supposed to be in the final event of the question, he was comparatively indifferent as to the present decision of the House. Whatever *they* might do, *The people of Great Britain, he was confident, would abolish the Slave-Trade, when, as would now soon happen, it's injustice and cruelty should be fairly laid before them.* It was a nest of serpents, which would never have endured so long, but for the darkness in which they lay hid. The light of day would now be let in on them, and they would vanish from the sight. For himself, he declared, that he was engaged in a work he never would abandon. The consciousness of the justice of his cause would carry him forward, though he were alone; but he could not but derive encouragement from considering with whom he was associated. He added, Let us not despair; it is a blessed cause, and success, ere long,

will crown our exertions. Already we have gained one victory : we have obtained, for these poor creatures, *The recognition of their human nature*, which, for a while, was most shamefully denied. This is the first fruits of our efforts ; let us persevere, and our triumph will be complete. Never, never will we desist till we have wiped away this scandal from the Christian name, released ourselves from the load of guilt, under which we at present labour, and have extinguished every trace of this bloody traffic, of which our posterity, looking back to the history of these enlightened times, will scarce believe that it has been suffered to exist so long, a disgrace and a dishonour to this Country.

Mr. Wilberforce then moved, " That the Chairman be instructed to move for leave to bring in a Bill to prevent the farther importation of Slaves into the British Colonies in the West Indies."

Colonel TARLETON declared, that " gratitude towards those constituents, who had sent him so honourably to that House, as well as a thorough conviction of the justice of their cause, impelled him to vindicate their character and property, although, perhaps, from inexperience, or inability, he might not be able to accomplish what he so ardently desired. The ingenuity, the amplification, and the pathetic eloquence, of the Hon. Gentleman, having worked no conviction on his mind, he should proceed to arrange the arguments he had to offer, against the Abolition of the Slave-Trade. So many branches of the commerce of this country were connected and interwoven with the question, that it would be necessary to make many statements, form several calculations, and read various extracts, to elucidate the subject. Throughout the whole of what he had to say, he should aim more at perspicuity than embellishment, and labour rather to convince the understanding than bewilder the imagination.

Before he entered upon any part of the subject, he thought it necessary, for the sake of clearness, and to prove to Gentlemen, that he did not mean to evade or blink any strong part of the question, to enumerate the different heads upon which he

was about to speak. He said, he should state the beginning of the Trade, the sanction given to it by Government, the manner of conducting the Trade on the Coast of Africa, the transit to the West Indies, the employment and treatment of the Negroes in the West Indies, the amount of the property engaged in the trade, the value of the West India Islands to this country, the eagerness other nations have discovered to enlarge their Slave-Trade, and the importance of the Trade as a nursery for seamen. He then went into an historical account, from the reign of Queen Elizabeth down to the present time, quoting his authority, and dwelling some time on this part of the subject.

Colonel Tarleton next came to the sanction of Parliament, which had always countenanced the Trade, and could not, without a breach of faith, be withdrawn; and here he recollected what had fallen from a Right Hon. Gentleman on a former occasion, and which he thought applicable to those concerned in the African Trade; it was, that upon no occasion, short of absolute necessity, ought private property to be seized by public acts, without granting a compensation. The Colonel contended, that the Africans themselves had no objections to the Trade; and many people who were prejudiced against it, had been led away by mistaken humanity, and often by misrepresentation. With regard to the number of deaths, which happened on the passage, he had access to examine, and could distinctly state, to the Committee, that they never had exceeded in the Liverpool ships, on an average, five out of an hundred, whereas, in regiments sent out to the West Indies or America, the average was about ten and a half in the hundred.

Many attempts had been made to cultivate the lands in the different Islands, by white labourers; but it was found, that from the difference of climate, and other causes, population had decreased, and that those who took the greatest pains to accomplish this, found that, in ten years time, they could not have any proportion of Whites capable of purposes of cultivation at all. He therefore agreed in the necessity of the Slave-Trade, if we meant to carry on the West India Commerce and Cultivation; and he quoted the opinions of Gov. Parry, Adm. Hotham, Com. Gardiner, Sir Arch. Campbell, and a long list

of respectable names, in support of the position which he had laid down. Next, he gave the opinion of that gallant officer, Lord Rodney, respecting the great advantage that accrued to the Navy, upon the breaking out of a war, by having so numerous a body of mariners, inured to the climate, when we wish to send a fleet to the West Indies; a circumstance worthy of attention, And from Liverpool alone, he said, the Navy might be supplied with 993 seamen annually, from the best calculation that could be made; an object that certainly ought not to escape the notice of a wise Government.

Col. Tarleton then proceeded nearly as follows:—Having received the indulgence of the House during various statements, which, perhaps, had nothing of novelty in them, but which were indispensably necessary, and which he had endeavoured to render as concise as possible, he would not much longer trespass on it's patience. It could not, however, he trusted, be deemed superfluous if he mentioned some circumstances to the House which he might have omitted, or which he had not sufficiently enforced to attract it's attention. He could wish Gentlemen to advert to the property and connections dependent on the African Trade; as much dependant on the African Trade, to use the language of a nervous and elegant writer, as a "bird is" "on it's wing, for food, and when wounded there, it starves!" He could wish to impress Gentlemen strongly with the recollection of the sanction the African Trade had obtained from Parliament. He could wish to remind them of the length of time the question of Abolition had been pending in that House. He could wish to give as much assistance as lay in his power, which he acknowledged to be extremely feeble, to accelerate that adjudication which had been so often, and so earnestly, entreated by the numerous merchants and manufacturers of this Country, whose interest had been materially injured by procrastination; and he trusted he could not make a futile appeal to that House, when he called upon it's justice to extend an immediate vote of protection to the West India Planters, whose lives had been, and were, exposed to imminent and hourly danger, and whose property had undergone a severe and unmerited depreciation, notwithstanding the existing laws of this country,

for

for the inquisitorial powers vested by the Constitution in that House. To what could Gentlemen ascribe that depreciation? To what could they impute the late insurrection at Dominica?—which Island the Governor lately pledged himself to hold in subjection, without the assistance of the military, but which was lately saved, from horrid carnage and midnight butchery, by the adventitious presence of two British regiments? To what, he repeated, could Gentlemen impute this insurrection, but to the question of Abolition? And, after a tedious investigation on that question for near four years, he could not discover the slightest reason to justify delay, except Gentlemen could not prevail upon themselves to decide, before an insurrection had absolutely taken place at Jamaica, when the sorrow, he had almost said the penitence, of the Mover and abettors of the Abolition, and the interference of that House, would be equally unavailing.

To gentlemen of great landed property; it was unnecessary for him to point out the tendency and probable effect of the proposed Abolition.—If he possessed all the eloquence and ingenuity in that House, with those powerful auxiliaries, he should not be able to convince them, that the Abolition would lessen the national debt, increase the commerce of the country, or take one fraction from the oppressive taxes they now endured: but, he believed they would give him credit, inexperienced as he was in that House, when he plainly advanced, that it would have a directly contrary effect; when he asserted, that the authors and abettors of the Abolition endanger their honour, their property, and their happiness; and when he inferred, that the Minister, not being taken by surprise, must be supposed to have some capital resource in store, either from some novel calculation that the land-tax would bear an additional burthen, or from some inexhaustible source of unclaimed property, which had hitherto escaped the vigilance of his predecessors in office, and would compensate to the public for such a diminution of the Trade, and consequent defalcation of the Revenue of the country:

To the mercantile part of the House, he must likewise use language, which, he was sorry to say, seemed consonant to the feelings of the authors and abettors of the Abolition. "Gentlemen, your success in trade, has of late years been so prodigious, that it seems necessary to suspend your activity, by cutting off one of the principal branches of your trade, for the sake of humanity and the honour of the nation. You are to have no farther respect for, or future confidence in, Acts of Parliament. The sanction of the Legislature is nothing. A few of the Ministerial side of this House have been gifted with religious inspiration, and, and the revelation has been extended to certain eminent Personages on this side of the House; and these enlightened Philanthropists have discovered, that it seems necessary, for the sake of humanity, and the honour of the nation, that all British merchants concerned in the African Trade should have their designs harrassed, their property injured, and their reputation traduced; notwithstanding such persecution must, undoubtedly, foster, encourage and aggrandize the surrounding nations of Europe, who rival Great Britain in her commerce, and in her navigation." As the superstition and bigotry, in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, which, during those dark, ignorant, and barbarous ages, threw down every barrier erected by reason and by justice—in the name of God, let not a mistaken humanity, in these enlightened times, furnish a colourable pretext for any injurious attack on property or reputation.

But if all the authorities which he had adduced, were doubtful—if his premises were fallacious—if some of the circumstances of cruelty were proved, which the Abolitionists have only asserted, and which, fortunately for this country, and happily for human nature, were unfounded, he should think himself guilty of a rash and impolitic measure in voting for the Abolition, if he took only a cursory glance at the finances of England, and her relative situation with Europe. He could not bring himself to think this a convenient time, the country in an eligible situation, or the Minister serious in his inclination to make an experiment which presents a certain prospect of loss, and no probability of advantage. An Abolition would instantly annihilate a trade, which annually employs upwards of 5,500 sailors, upwards

wards of 160 ships, and whose exports amount to 800,000 *l.* sterling. And the same experiment would, undoubtedly, bring the West India trade to decay, whose exports and imports amount to upwards of 6,000,000 *l.* sterling, and which gives employment to upwards of 160,000 tons of additional shipping, and sailors in proportion—all objects of too great magnitude to be hazarded on an unnecessary speculation, which, in all human probability, would prove ruinous to the commercial consequence, to the national honour, and the political glory of Great Britain.

Mr. GROSVENOR, having come into the House while Col. Tarleton was speaking, rose immediately after him. He pre-
 faced his speech with many compliments to the humanity and good intentions of the Honourable Mover. He said, he had read only the Report of the Privy Council; for he wanted no other evidence, and it appeared to him, from the delay of two years, that the Honourable Gentleman himself must have great doubts of the propriety of his Motion; for, if it was so clear a point as it was declared to be, it could not have needed either so much evidence or so much time. Mr. Grosvenor said, he had heard a great deal of kidnapping Slaves, and of other barbarous practices. He was sorry for it; but it should be recollected, that these things were the consequence of the natural law of Africa, and that, instead of declaiming against it, we should endeavour, like wise men, to turn it to our advantage. Gentlemen had displayed a great deal of eloquence in exhibiting, in horrid colours, the traffic in Slaves. He acknowledged it was an *unamiable* Trade, so also were many others: the trade of a butcher was an unamiable trade, but it was a very necessary one, notwithstanding. He could not help thinking there was great reason to doubt the propriety of the Motion; and, the more he considered the subject, the more was he persuaded that it was an improvident and unwise measure. Mr. Grosvenor said, he would endeavour to explain the nature of his objections to the Motion, by introducing a story. When the Duke of Marlborough was abroad, the Commander

of a garrison, which he visited, made an apology for not saluting His Grace, according to the custom, assuring him he had one hundred reasons to assign for not doing it, the first of which was, that he had no cannon : upon which the Duke immediately answered, that he would excuse him the other ninety and nine. In the same manner, said Mr. Grosvenor, "I have twenty reasons for disapproving of the Abolition of the Slave-Trade, the first of which is, That the thing is impossible ; and, therefore, I need not give the other nineteen." Parliament could not abolish the Trade : they might relinquish it ; but to whom ? To France, Spain, and Holland, and other countries, who would take it up and share it among them ; so that the Trade would be still continued, and without the humane regulations which were applied to it by the English.

After some other observations, Mr. Grosvenor quoted a saying of the late Alderman Beckford, on the origin of the American War, when he cautioned the House against it : "Meddle not with troubled waters (said the Alderman) they will be found to be bitter waters, and the waters of affliction." He again said, that he admitted it was an unamiable Trade ; but he would not gratify his humanity at the expence of the interests of his country, and he thought we should not too curiously enquire into the unpleasant circumstances with which perhaps it was attended. He should, therefore, certainly oppose the Abolition.

Mr. JAMES MARTIN said, that whoever had lived to any advanced age, must be well aware to what a considerable degree a mistaken self-interest could darken the understanding, and pervert the judgment, even of the best meaning persons. He had often, with much concern, observed, how very perniciously this bias operated to the detriment of society, and to the disgrace of mankind ; but he was not apprised of the full power of this delusion of the mind, till the business now before the Committee began to be the subject of public discussion. He had always conceived, that the custom of trafficking in human creatures, had been incautiously begun, without its dreadful and necessary consequences

consequences being foreseen;—for he never could persuade himself that any man, under the influence of moral principles, could suffer himself, knowingly, to be carrying on a trade replete with fraud, cruelty, and destruction. He said, destruction, for so be thought, and thought the destruction introduced and occasioned by this most shocking Trade, was of the blackest and most inhuman species; inasmuch as it was a lingering death which, instead of putting an end to the misery of the sufferers by a speedy stroke, not only afflicted and tortured the body, but, by depriving the wretch of all the dearest comforts of life, harrassed the mind, till nature, sinking under grief and despair, kindly granted that relief which the tyrant Master, for the sake of his own private, but much mistaken, self-interest, would deny. But, he observed, it was clear to every person of accurate observation, that those who blindly and immediately listened to the suggestions of a narrow self-interest, did really thwart and counteract that interest to which they were ready to sacrifice every just, noble and public principle.

He said, it was well observed, in the excellent Petition from the University of Cambridge to that House, against the Slave-Trade, that, “A firm belief in the Providence of a benevolent Creator, assures them that no system founded on the oppression of one part of mankind, can be beneficial to another.” He felt much real concern and mortification, that in an Assembly of the Representatives of a country, boasting itself zealous, not only for its own liberties, but for the general rights of mankind, it should be necessary to say a single word on such a subject; but, from the sentiments he had heard in various conversations, very much to his surprise, it appeared, that, however strongly the sense of truth and justice was impressed on the minds of unprejudiced persons, the deceitfulness of the human heart was such as to change the appearances of truth when it stood in opposition to self-interest, as self-interest is often unfortunately misunderstood.—He verily believed, that there was hardly any thing so execrably unjust and cruel, that men, who are thoroughly selfish and avaricious, would not bring themselves to believe to be right and defensible, and would not consequently adduce specious and sophistical arguments to support; but trusted, that

every honest man would treat such arguments with the contempt and indignation which they deserved, and that Britain, as a wise and virtuous nation should, would hold fast and cling to the eternal and universal principles of truth, justice, and humanity.

He lamented that he had heard doctrines maintained, which seemed to have been reserved for times, the most flagrantly profligate and abandoned; but he trusted that such doctrines would not be received, or even be offered, in that Assembly. He never expected to hear that the everlasting laws of righteousness, were to give way to imaginary, political and commercial expediency, and that multitudes of our fellow creatures, several scores of thousands annually, were to be reduced to the most wretched of all states, that Individuals might enjoy a greater degree of opulence, or that the State might collect somewhat more for its revenue. These considerations, compared with the sacred and eternal rules of justice and mercy, were so trifling, that he trusted they would have no weight whatever, when opposed to them; and he could not but be very sanguine in his hopes of success to the measure proposed by the worthy Mover, when he considered, that from the goodness of his cause, he must necessarily have the countenance and support of the most respectable Bodies of men, as well as of private Individuals, of almost every description, as he should now endeavour to show.

However, Mr. Martin said, we might have differed in party opinions, concerning certain high and distinguished characters, he believed all would allow the first persons of Royal dignity in this country, to be of merciful and benevolent dispositions, and that they had inspired those descended from them, with the same sentiments of humanity and generosity. This being so, we might justly entertain the warmest hopes of the countenance and support of every part of the Royal Family. Both Houses of Parliament were now engaged in the prosecution of a Gentleman accused of cruelty and oppression in a high degree. He feared that some of the charges, brought against that Gentleman, might be too well founded; but so far as appeared to him, in regard to the exercise of any cruelties brought home to him, they were neither to be compared in number or degree, to those which were every day, and every hour, committed, in the

abominable traffic, the Abolition of which was now under discussion.—Of the Reverend Bench of Bishops, who were, by their doctrine and example, to render Christianity amiable, and to recommend it to the world, he must not be permitted to doubt, on this occasion; and some of the inferior Clergy had already manifested an honest zeal in this most righteous cause.—The University of Cambridge had presented a petition to that House, worthy the attention of every well-wisher to humanity; and the sister University had, by the mouth of one of her respectable Representatives, given sanction to the measure. Dissenters, of various denominations (particularly the Quakers, who, upon this occasion, to their immortal honour, had taken a leading part) vied with some of the most respectable of the established Church, in standing forth in this excellent cause.—We had, for many years, and, God knows, with too much reason, been hearing violent accusations of delinquents from India.—Surely, the accusers of such delinquents would be eager, upon this occasion, to show that they had been actuated by the pure principles of humanity, without party spirit or other unworthy motives. Particularly, he should much confide in those Gentlemen, who, as Managers of the prosecution against Mr. Hastings, had exhibited such astonishing eloquence, as, perhaps, was never excelled, or even equalled. The same powers of eloquence, exerted in a cause at least as worthy, must bear down all obstacles or resistance, and defeat every opposition that narrow and mistaken self-interest could raise against the measure. Some of the greatest trading Towns in this country, had declared for the Abolition, in which they had been joined by many of the first Counties in weight and consequence, particularly by that County of which the Honourable Mover is one of the Representatives. The County of York had always been, and, he trusted, ever would be, forward to take the lead in every public measure, in which the general rights of mankind were interested. He was persuaded, that the wishes of that distinguished County upon this, as upon every occasion, would be powerfully supported by its two excellent Representatives.

Every honest man would treat such arguments with the contempt and indignation which they deserved, and that Britain, as a wise and virtuous nation should, would hold fast and cling to the eternal and universal principles of truth, justice, and humanity.

He lamented that he had heard doctrines maintained, which seemed to have been reserved for times, the most flagrantly profligate and abandoned; but he trusted that such doctrines would not be received, or even be offered, in that Assembly. He never expected to hear that the everlasting laws of righteousness, were to give way to imaginary, political and commercial expediency, and that multitudes of our fellow creatures, several scores of thousands annually, were to be reduced to the most wretched of all states, that Individuals might enjoy a greater degree of opulence, or that the State might collect somewhat more for its revenue. These considerations, compared with the sacred and eternal rules of justice and mercy, were so trifling, that he trusted they would have no weight whatever, when opposed to them; and he could not but be very sanguine in his hopes of success to the measure proposed by the worthy Mover, when he considered, that from the goodness of his cause, he must necessarily have the countenance and support of the most respectable Bodies of men, as well as of private Individuals, of almost every description, as he should now endeavour to show.

However, Mr. Martin said, we might have differed in party opinions, concerning certain high and distinguished characters, he believed all would allow the first persons of Royal dignity in this country, to be of merciful and benevolent dispositions, and that they had inspired those descended from them, with the same sentiments of humanity and generosity. This being so, we might justly entertain the warmest hopes of the countenance and support of every part of the Royal Family. Both Houses of Parliament were now engaged in the prosecution of a Gentleman accused of cruelty and oppression in a high degree. He feared that some of the charges, brought against that Gentleman, might be too well founded; but so far as appeared to him, in regard to the exercise of any cruelties brought home to him, they were neither to be compared in number or degree, to those which were every day, and every hour, committed, in the

abominable traffic, the Abolition of which was now under discussion.—Of the Reverend Bench of Bishops, who were, by their doctrine and example, to render Christianity amiable, and to recommend it to the world, he must not be permitted to doubt, on this occasion; and some of the inferior Clergy had already manifested an honest zeal in this most righteous cause.—The University of Cambridge had presented a petition to that House, worthy the attention of every well-wisher to humanity; and the sister University had, by the mouth of one of her respectable Representatives, given sanction to the measure. Dissenters, of various denominations (particularly the Quakers, who, upon this occasion, to their immortal honour, had taken a leading part) vied with some of the most respectable of the established Church, in standing forth in this excellent cause.—We had, for many years, and, God knows, with too much reason, been hearing violent accusations of delinquents from India.—Surely, the accusers of such delinquents would be eager, upon this occasion, to show that they had been actuated by the pure principles of humanity, without party spirit or other unworthy motives. Particularly, he should much confide in those Gentlemen, who, as Managers of the prosecution against Mr. Hastings, had exhibited such astonishing eloquence, as, perhaps, was never excelled, or even equalled. The same powers of eloquence, exerted in a cause at least as worthy, must bear down all obstacles or resistance, and defeat every opposition that narrow and mistaken self-interest could raise against the measure. Some of the greatest trading Towns in this country, had declared for the Abolition, in which they had been joined by many of the first Counties in weight and consequence, particularly by that County of which the Honourable Mover is one of the Representatives. The County of York had always been, and, he trusted, ever would be, forward to take the lead in every public measure, in which the general rights of mankind were interested. He was persuaded, that the wishes of that distinguished County upon this, as upon every occasion, would be powerfully supported by its two excellent Representatives.

With so much good support, and so good a cause, it must be impossible to fail.---Let but every man stand forth, who had, at any time in his life, boasted, as an Englishman, of a superior regard to the general rights of nature and of mankind, and who had affected, at least, to despise other nations as being defective in such regard---and we should most assuredly succeed; but if it were otherwise, we must have a most shameless effrontery, if we should ever after pretend to the character of real Christians, or Britons, or indeed of men of such general moral principles as should govern every human being, of whatever country or religion.---Indeed, as Britons, and especially as the Representatives of a people priding themselves in, and perpetually boasting of, liberal sentiments towards all mankind, we should be particularly cautious, and even extremely anxious, to avoid the smallest appearance of any unjust and tyrannical principle. But how distinguishingly hypocritical should we appear, if, instead of defending the rights of the oppressed, we should be the leaders in oppression and cruelty, or at least wait for the example of those whom we accuse of being tyrannical, before we checked and stopped the arm of tyranny, which had been too long violently wielded over our fellow-creatures?

We who were tenacious to excess, if it were possible, of our rights, and manifested the hottest indignation even at the smallest personal insult, (particularly if it was offered by the hand of Government)---we, who had punished tyrants of the highest rank in this country---were we to suffer innocent creatures to be whipped, and scourged, and tortured without discretion, without controul, without trial, and without law? In short, if we had any regard to national reputation, let us not add the most shameful and abominable hypocrisy to guilt and infamy, by exercising tyranny of the blackest kind, and affecting, at the same time, the keenest indignation at every exertion of power amongst ourselves, that was not strictly and perfectly legal. He was so far from condemning the jealousy of illegal power amongst ourselves, that it had his highest applause---but he could wish, that the same laudable principle should be exerted in it's fullest extent, towards the rest of mankind. *While we could hardly bear the sight of any thing RESEMBLING slavery, even as*
a punish-

a punishment, among ourselves, should we countenance the exercise of the most despotic power over millions of creatures, who, for aught we knew, were not only innocent but meritorious?

It had been frequently, but most disgracefully, said, by the advocates for the continuance, or at least by those who were not very zealous for the Abolition, of this commerce, That *We* should not be too eager in setting the example; but that we should wait for the French, or other foreigners, to take the lead in this business. How far such a sentiment was consistent with the ancient, noble, and generous character of this nation, and with the high opinion we were apt to entertain of our national honour at this time, he would leave to the judgment of every impartial person. But he would flatter himself, that we should rather have been eager to be first in so good a cause, and that we should rather have been fearful of being anticipated by those whose principles, in regard to the rights of mankind, we had not been accustomed to hold in very high respect. If any nation was to be foremost in such a matter, which was most bound to take the lead, such as pretended, and proudly too, to a vast superiority over the rest of mankind in their civil rights, or such as they had always affected to despise for abject submission, and the meanest servility? If *We* should set this good example, and not be followed by other European nations, let the guilt and infamy of such a system lie heavy on those, who, in that case, would continue to act upon it, in spite of example, added to the dictates both of reason and religion.

Surely, Mr. Martin said, this motion came recommended to us in the strongest manner. The Honourable and worthy Gentleman who introduced it, was justly esteemed for the respectability of his character. He was one of the Representatives of a county, which, as he had said before (but which, for its honour, could not be mentioned too often) had always manifested a readiness to take the lead in every public measure, for the good of the community, or for the general benefit of mankind. If this business had been in hands less able and less respectable, he should *now* particularly have much regretted the loss of one of the Honourable Gentleman's predecessors in the representation

tion of Yorkshire, who, he was sure, upon this occasion, would have eagerly displayed that ardent zeal for the unalienable rights of *all* his fellow-creatures, which was one of the chief characteristics of that most excellent citizen; but, he was persuaded, that, as the present Representatives of the County of York had been worthy followers of that bright example, so, on this most interesting occasion, they would burn with the same ardent zeal for relieving the distressed, which animated the breast of that most incomparable man. Would to God, that every Member of the British Parliament would look up with reverence to that illustrious pattern! Let them follow his footsteps in the purity of their conduct, in their love of justice, mercy, and truth, and in the universal rectitude of all their measures. If they did this, they would pay the same tender regard to the Rights of other countries as to their own; and, for his part, he should never believe those persons really sincere, who were loud in their professions of love to liberty, if he saw that love confined to the narrow circle of one community, which ought to be extended to the natural Rights of every human inhabitant of the globe.

We should be more able, Mr. Martin said, to bring ourselves up to this standard of rectitude, if we heartily endeavoured to imagine ourselves in the situation of those who are oppressed, and then seriously considered what we should think of such as would wish to establish a just and equitable system of morality in regard to themselves, and one of another kind towards those, whom, for certain reasons, they might erroneously think it their interest to oppress.—But, he added, let us not deceive ourselves so grossly, as to imagine, that it is our real interest to oppress any one. The advantages to be obtained by oppression and tyranny were imaginary and deceitful to the oppressor and the tyrant; and the evils they caused to the oppressed, were heavy, grievous, and many times insupportable.

Before he sat down, he would beg leave to observe, that if, in delivering those sentiments which he had presumed to offer to the House, he should appear to have expressed himself in any way too strongly, or with too much vehemence, he freely trusted to the candour and fairness of Gentlemen for giving him the credit of not wishing or meaning to say any thing violent

or offensive. But he must declare, that he should think most contemptibly of himself, could he mention the enormities of the Slave-Trade, without a very considerable degree of emotion and resentment; nevertheless, he would wish it were perfectly understood, that this resentment went only to the principles and consequences of the Trade itself, without any ill will towards the persons concerned in it. Many of those persons, from peculiar situations, and from circumstances, perhaps almost unavoidable, might be involved in it, and probably much to their concern and discontent. Such persons, he doubted not, from use and habit, saw it in a very different light, however, from others. If a person, being betrayed by his feelings into an unbecoming degree of heat, in such matters as relate solely to his own selfish interests, was pardoned for such offence, he surely had a juster claim to liberal allowance, whose feelings were excited by the wrongs of others, with whom he had only that general connection, which, however, ought strongly to be felt by every human creature.

Mr. Martin said, *he* could suffer no grievance whatever from the continuance of the Slave-Trade; and he therefore trusted, that there would be a disposition to excuse any excess that could have been occasioned only by that pity which he felt for others. He was aware but of one unworthy motive to which his conduct, as well as that of many other individuals, upon this occasion, might be attributed—He meant the ostentation and parade of virtuous and worthy sentiments. Now, he said, he must beg leave to remark, that it appeared to him that there is no one good action which could be performed in life that might not be attributed, by suspicion or malevolence, to that particular motive. Men might always insinuate, that vain glory was the cause by which individuals were incited to actions apparently good, but that matter must be decided between God and the consciences of those persons whose conduct was suspected, or perhaps maliciously accused, even without suspicion; and if the general tenor of a man's life did not fairly lead to suspicion that he was hypocritical or ostentatious, it was surely highly uncharitable to impute to him such disposition without sufficient grounds; and it was moreover of most pernicious consequence to the public,

as a great discouragement to men from acting meritoriously, when they not only lost the credit of so acting, but were accused of doing that which was right in itself, merely for the sake of public and popular applause. If, notwithstanding this remark, he should be so unhappy as to draw upon himself, by the part he had taken in this business, that harsh and undeserved censure which he wished to deprecate, he must endeavour to satisfy himself with the consciousness of his own fair intentions, and his most sincere unwillingness to give offence to any one, and with declaring, that as he did not pretend to judge of the feelings of other men's minds, so he must protest, that seeing this matter in the light he did, he should esteem himself one of the worst of men, did he not exert every means in his power perfectly to abolish such abominable wickedness. If, in attempting to forward this Abolition, he showed the weakness of his ability, he must console himself with the consideration, that he felt more solid comfort from sound public principles and consistent conduct therein, than he imagined he should do from the exertion of any the most brilliant faculties with which he might have been blessed.

He had only to conclude with giving his hearty assent in the most public manner, to the present motion, and with imploring the blessing of Heaven on every honest and earnest endeavour for the attainment of it's perfect and complete success. Mr. Martin added his tribute of sincere thanks to the Hon. Gentleman who had made the motion of that day, and to those Honourable Gentlemen who had particularly assisted him in the prosecution of this business. He was very certain that, they deserved the Thanks of that House and the Public, and that when this matter should be thoroughly understood, they would receive those Thanks in the fullest and sincerest manner.

Mr. BURDON said, he was a good deal embarrassed how to act. The Honourable Gentleman who moved the question, had, in a great measure, met his ideas. He considered himself as very much in his hands; but he wished to go gradually, and not so much at once, to the question of Abolition. He wished

wished to give time to the Planters, for taking such measures as would keep up their stock; and he feared the immediate Abolition might cause a monopoly among the rich Planters, to the prejudice of the less affluent. We ought, like a judicious physician, to follow Nature, and promote a recovery that should be gradual. He wished, therefore, for some motion short of Abolition.

Mr. FRANCIS, after a compliment to Mr. Wilberforce, stated, that personal considerations might appear to incline him to go against the side which he was about to take, namely, that of strenuously supporting the motion. Having, himself, an interest in the West Indies, he thought that what he should submit to the House, would have the double effect of both evidence and argument: and he stated, most unequivocally, his opinion, That the Abolition of the Slave-Trade would tend materially to the benefit of the West Indies.

The arguments urged by the Honourable Gentleman were supported by the facts, which he had proved in evidence, more strongly than any arguments had ever been supported in any speech he had heard in that House. He wished, however, that more of these facts had been introduced into the debate; for they were apt to have a greater effect on the mind than mere reasonings, however just and powerful. Many persons had affirmed, that the Slave-Trade was politic and expedient; *but it was worthy of remark, that no man had ventured to deny that it was CRIMINAL.* Criminal, however, he declared it was, in the highest degree; but how far politic or expedient he greatly doubted. Nay, he did not even doubt it; for both its inexpediency and injustice had been clearly established in the admirable statement of the Honourable Gentleman. He dwelt much on the *unhappy situation of the Negroes in the West Indies, who were without the protection of Government or of efficient Laws, subject to the mere caprice of men who were, at once, the Parties, the Judges, and the Executioners.*

He instanced an overseer, who, having thrown a Negro into a copper of boiling cane-juice, for a trifling offence, was punished

merely by the loss of his place, and by being obliged to pay the value of the Slave. He stated another instance of a girl, of fourteen, who was dreadfully whipt for coming too late to her work in the morning—fell down motionless after it, and was then dragged along the ground, by the legs, to an hospital, where she died. The murderer, though tried, was acquitted by a jury of his peers, from the idea, that it was impossible a Master should destroy his own property. That this was a notorious fact, mentioned in the Jamaica Gazette, which had even happened, *since* the question of Abolition had been started.

The only argument used against such cruelties, was, The Master's interest in the Slave: but he urged the common cruelty to horses, in which their drivers equally have an interest, as a proof that this is no security. He had never heard an instance of a West-India Master that was punished for putting his Negro to death. The propagation of them was checked, because it was thought more profitable, and less troublesome, to buy a full grown Negro, than to rear a child. Mr. Francis repeated, that his interest might have inclined him to the other side of the question; but he did not chuse to compromise between his Interest and his Duty; for, if he abandoned his Duty, he should not have been happy in this world, nor deserved nor hoped to be happy in the next.

Mr. PITT then rose, but not, as he said, to enter into the question at so late an hour (it being about eleven o'clock). He should wish to deliver his own sentiments very fully, which, he feared, it was impossible to do that night; nor could there be time for a full discussion of the subject, on the part of other Gentlemen, unless an adjournment was to take place. With the consent of the House, he should therefore move, That the Chairman should now leave the Chair, with a view of resuming the subject on the very next day, meaning to put off the Orders of that day, until the day after.

Mr. CAWTHORN said, that he wished, himself, not to separate before the question was decided; but, provided there was no longer delay intended, than till the day following, he would not press his objection.

Col. TARLETON, however, rose to say, that, as he was anxious to have the question settled without any delay whatever, as the House was then extremely full, and as there were many Gentlemen who, to his knowledge, were going next day out of town, he certainly should resist the motion of Adjournment.

The Gallery was then cleared, when the following conversation took place.

Col. PHIPPS said, that though he agreed with the Honourable Gentleman, in opposing the Abolition of the Slave-Trade, yet he could not agree in opposing the question of Adjournment; for he wished to have an opportunity of declaring what were those reasons which would decide his conduct, and he appealed to the candour of those who thought with him, whether there ought not to be an opportunity afforded for farther discussion.

Mr. Fox rose and said, that although the opposition to an Adjournment was undoubtedly uncandid and unbecoming the House, yet he thought the Honourable Gentleman who pressed for an immediate division, understood better the interest of his own side of the question, than the other Honourable Gentleman: for Mr. Fox had ever conceived that the only way, by which the Abolition of the Slave-Trade could be prevented, must be by stifling all enquiry, and by hurrying the House into some vote, that might seem to decide the question, before opportunity of any real debate upon the principles of the Slave-Trade was afforded. It was a Trade which, the Gentlemen themselves well knew, *could not bear to be discussed*. Let there be discussion, and, although there were some symptoms of pre-

determination in some Gentlemen, the Abolition of it must be carried. He would not believe that there could be found in the House of Commons, men of *hard hearts* enough, and of such *inaccessible understandings*, as to vote an assent to the continuance of the Trade; and then go home to their houses, their friends, and their families, satisfied with their vote, after being made fully aware of what they were doing, by having opened their ears to the discussion.

Col. PHIPPS explained, and asserted again, that he wished for a fair discussion.

Mr. PITT agreed with Mr. Fox, that, from a thorough discussion of the subject, there was every reason to augur that the Abolition would be resolved on. He observed, that, under the imputations with which this Trade was loaded, Gentlemen should remember they could not do justice to their own Characters, unless they stood up in the House, and gave their reasons for opposing the Abolition of it: that it was unusual also to force any question, of such importance, to so hasty a decision. That, for his own part, it was a duty incumbent on him, from the situation in which he stood, to state very fully his own sentiments on the whole question; and that, however exhausted both himself and the House might be, he was resolved it should not pass without discussion, as long as he had strength to utter a word upon it. *That every principle that could bind a man of honour and of conscience, would impel him to give the most powerful support he could, to the motion for the Abolition.* But that he had waited to hear what could be the arguments of Gentlemen, on the other side of the question, whom he conceived to be bound, still more strongly than himself, to vote for the Adjournment.

Col. TARLETON said he should decline pressing his opposition to the Adjournment,

Lord CARHAMPTON confessed it would be indecent to press for the immediate decision, and agreed therefore to the motion of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

At half past Eleven, the House Adjourned.

TUESDAY,

TUESDAY, APRIL 19.

SIR WILLIAM YOUNG rose and said, that having the day before listened, with due attention, and he might say, with admiration, to the Speech of his Honourable Friend, he felt the presumption of any attempt to counteract the first impression on the minds and passions of the House, and he therefore had reserved his opposition to a more cool and temperate period of the Debate.

He knew that the part which, with others, he was to take, would bear time and reflection, that he had the vantage-ground of fact and of argument, which he had much need to possess, while so much ability, as well as influence of situation and character, were ranged on the side of his adversaries. Truth and reason, he said, must indeed be with him, and strongly too, to warrant a single hope of success in the event of that night's Debate!—Yet that hope he ventured to entertain, relying on the facts and inferences which he should state.

It was indisputable, that the interests of private property and of commerce, might be affected by the measure proposed. A new trade, indeed, in Africa, was held out as an indemnification; and considerations also of still greater force, namely, the paramount claims of justice and of humanity, had also been brought in aid of the argument. Such claims no one would oppose, when clear and acknowledged; but the premises on which the Committee were urged to proceed, ought first to be examined, and a discrimination made of circumstances, of objects and effects. The probable attainments, on the side of Philanthropy and moral obligation, ought to be sifted out, since the sacrifice

crifice proposed was, in the opinion of many, nothing less than a considerable portion of British Commerce, and an ultimate surrender of the British Colonies.

Before he gave his vote for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade, he should wish to be convinced, that whilst *Britain loses, Africa would gain*. No one was more averse to a traffic of men, termed a Slave-Trade, and he happily anticipated it's termination, at no very distant period of years, under a wise and temperate system of regulation. He spoke of the present measure, as crude and indolent, as precluding better and wiser measures already in train, and as tending to withhold the necessary encouragement to our Colonies, in what they are now doing, preparatory to the object, of finally suppressing the Trade, which we had in view; and he observed, that it ought to be the characteristic of a British Parliament, to attain not only the *best ends, but by the wisest means*.

Great Britain might abandon her share of this Trade, but could not abolish it. The general question of the Abolition of the Trade for Slaves to Africa, was not before the Committee. They were not an Assembly of Delegates from France, from Spain, from Holland, and other Powers, now engaged in that Commerce, but the Legislature of a single Nation, whose dereliction of it could not, in anywise suppress, but would eventually aggravate, those *miseries incident to it, which every enlightened man must acknowledge, and every good man must deplore*. He wished to see the traffic for ever closed, as much as his Honourable Friend, but that "consummation devoutly to be wished," would be farther removed, by a too hasty and unqualified secession on the part of Great Britain.

We might, by regulation, give example of new sentiments, new policy, and principles of justice, and of nature, both to Africa, and to the Nations trading with her; but if we suddenly withdrew from this Commerce of Slaves, like Pontius Pilate, we washed our hands indeed, but we should not be innocent as to the consequences.

He then stated, that the Nations of Europe, as well as the United States of America, were crowding to this Trade for Slaves, and only waited it's suppression, on the part of Great Britain

Britain, to rush on the Coasts of Africa, in competition for the share of traffic, thus newly opened to them. The new projects would go far beyond the old mark of temperate acquisition, and in the zeal of rivalry, the present evils of *comparatively* sober dealing, would be aggravated to an enormity beyond all estimate, in this new Auction, this new heat of *Bidders for Life and Limb*.

On the first agitation of this business, his Honourable Friend spoke with confidence, of other Nations abandoning this traffic, after our example. The prophecy was scarcely delivered, when a similar procedure was instituted in the National Assembly of France, under every advantage: yet what was the result? The Slave-Trade was referred to a Select Committee, and, the report of that Committee to reject the measure of Abolition, M. Barnave moved sundry resolutions to such effect, which were received with acclamation, and voted with unanimous assent. He was astonished to hear again, the same promises and expectations held out. He then quoted the evidences of Mr. Dalzell, Mr. Penny, Mr. Falconbridge, and others, to show that the French were actually foremost in continuing and extending the Slave-Trade, giving bounties of 40 Livres a ton on the shipping employed in it, and 60 Livres on each Slave, imported into Martinique and Guadaloupe, 100 Livres on each, being the bounty to several other Islands; that Spain also was seeking a Slave-Trade, giving a bounty of four dollars each, and opening certain Ports for two years, to all foreign vessels, freighted, exclusively, with African Slaves; that Denmark also was desirous of a portion of this Commerce, as appeared from the evidence; that America did not neglect this Trade, but was advancing in it: and that the Dutch, as appeared by resolutions of the States of Holland and West Friezeland, recognized it's necessity, and formally recommended effectual means for it's recovery.

The consequences of this new competition, he was persuaded, would be more pernicious to the Africans, than the share of Trade now held by Great Britain. *Things were bad enough indeed, as they now were*, but they would bear aggravation. He did not admit the disorders imputed to the Trade, in all their

extent. The Slave-Coast was said, in evidence, to be populous. He did not allow, therefore, that *pillaging* or *kidnapping*, could be general, though *too frequent instances of it were in proof*. Crimes were said to be *falsely imputed*, for the purpose of procuring Slaves; this also, *he admitted*, but only to a certain extent. Witchcraft, he believed, was the secret of poisoning (a crime, surely, of the deepest dye) and adultery, in countries, where, as in Africa, polygamy was practised, was wont to be so severely punished, that a number of convictions on this ground, was not to be wondered at. He feared, if a sale of these Criminals was hastily done away, massacre would be the substitute; and he urged the sanguinary temper of the Africans, which appeared from a variety of witnesses, as a ground of this suspicion.

His Hon. Friend had stated, that a full third of those sold to the slave-ships, were children; and had then asked, as in just triumph of argument, "Have these committed crimes, have these been taken in war?" In answer to this, he declared, That women and children were often included in the massacres of savage Nations, engaged in war; and he quoted a Book, entitled, A State of Hudson's Bay, mentioning the destruction of a young girl, by the Savages, at war, in proof of this assertion.

A Right Honourable Gentleman, of leading Abilities, had asked, on a former day, "Is it an excuse, for committing a robbery on Hounslow Heath, to say, that another would commit it, adding murder also, if you did not?" This was begging the question. A Trade for Slaves did not necessarily imply robbery or rapine. Not long since, Great Britain sold her Convicts, indirectly at least, to Slavery.—But he was no advocate for the Trade; it rested on principles repugnant to the temper of his mind. He wished it had never begun. He wished it might soon terminate; but the means proposed were not merely inadequate, but would preclude the effect. He had shown, that other States would supersede, and even go beyond us in the Trade, if we left it. Where then, would be the improved manners and industry of the Africans?

He

He therefore thought, that all argument respecting the improved agriculture, manufactures, and civilization of Africa, ought to be put out of the question. A Right Hon. Gentleman (Mr. Burke) distinguished for his genius, had said, " That in adopting the measure proposed, we must prepare to pay the price of our virtue." He was ready to pay his share of that price; but, the object of purchase must be ascertained. Was it the happiness or the misery of thousands? Gentlemen must not be allured from their duty, by mere names. If they did not estimate the effect, it was not benevolence, but dissipation.

Some persons, in a high tone, had said, " A traffic in human flesh, was not to be borne with; let the consequences be what they would, the national honour, glory, and character, required it's suppression; the consequences were not at our door." He answered, that his conscience told him, that the consequences were at our door, and though statesmen might rest every thing on a plausible manifesto of cause, the humbler moralist, meditating on peace and good will towards men, would venture to call such statesmen responsible for consequences. He then spoke of the regulations respecting objects of sale in Africa, demurrage on the Coast, transport to the West Indies, or the Settlement of Slaves when arrived there. The Trade to Africa, he said, must principally be abolished in and from the West Indies.

In regard to the Colonies, a sudden Abolition would introduce oppression, and defeat the purposes of humanity. We ought, also, rather to lead our Colonies into the way we deem right, than force them to it, especially when Government had once protected, and even instituted the present course of trade. No violence, but preparatory experiment, should be used in order to show that nothing but extreme necessity would induce the Legislature to change it's ancient and it's own system. He was persuaded the Legislatures in the West Indies would act wisely and humanely, to attain the object pointed out to them; *that a natural increase of their Negroes might be effected by an improved system of Legislation*; and that, in the result, the Slave-Trade would no longer be necessary.

He insisted that a direct Abolition of the Trade would cause both distress and disaffection in our Colonies; that supplies were necessary for some period to come; that the Negroes did not now generally increase by birth; that the numerous White Servants and Apprentices, appropriated to themselves a great number of Negro females, which caused the disproportion of sexes to be more material; that the gradation of ages was not yet duly filled, there not having been so great an attention to breeding some time since, as there was now; that the neglect of marriage, the dissoluteness of morals, and the *inattention to infants*, were also evils which could not be overcome suddenly.

He spoke of the Planters, as oppressed with debts, and as being generally the Slaves of the British Creditors, that they could not afford to remit the industry of their Slaves, and that if their numbers were less, their work being more, the extent of their misery could not be conceived without horror. He quoted Mr. Otteley, Chief Justice in St. Vincent's, after paying him some handsome compliments, in confirmation of this. Slaves, it was said by him, *were liable to seizure for their master's debts*, in default of other goods and chattels, *nor was there any provision in this case, against the separation of families*, except as to the mother and infant child. These separations were one of the chief outrages complained of in Africa; why then should we institute new causes of such separation in the West Indies? The confinement on board a slave-ship was also bitterly complained of; but under a distrain for debt, the poor Slave might linger in a gaol twice or thrice the time of a Middle Passage.

On it's own grounds, he most explicitly declared, that he could not be an advocate for the traffic in Slaves, on any one question, even of natural expediency; but as a resource, and he hoped but a temporary one, to our West India Colonies, it was of such importance as to touch the very existence of the British Empire. He then stated the amount of exports from Great Britain to the West Indies, in value above 1,600,000*l.* and it's imports above 3,700,000*l.* the excise and customs on which were about 1,600,000*l.* the ships being 570, and the tonnage above an eighth of the whole tonnage of these kingdoms.

He then hinted at the collateral advantages of the West India Trade, and said that every thing he had stated, the Committee was requested to endanger, at least, by a vote for immediate Abolition.

Sir William Young then made some observations on the volume of evidence relating to the West India Planters, who he said, in the course of this business, had been no way spared. He blamed, in strong terms, the censure cast upon them, and the cruel stories hastily and lightly told. He adverted, with regret, to the invidious comparisons which degraded a British Slave-owner, below a Frenchman, a Spaniard, or a Dutchman, in the same circumstances, observing, that one of our best comic writers discriminated better the pretensions of our people. When wishing to show benevolence in it's fairest colours, he personified it in the character and conduct of the *West Indian*.

He wished that the Slave might become as secure, or even more so, than the Apprentice in this country, but it was necessary that the alarms concerning the Abolition of the Trade, should, in the mean time, be quieted, and he rejoiced that the motion before the House, was such as to put the question at issue.

He regretted all the hasty expressions which had been thrown out the day before, and the want of Christian Charity, which they seemed to imply; and he trusted that the good sense, and true benevolence of the House, would reject the present motion.

Mr. MATTHEW MONTAGU spoke a few words in support of the motion, which, he said, he ought not to doubt, would be carried. After condemning the Trade in the strongest manner, he declared, *That as long as he had life, he would use every faculty of his body and mind in endeavouring to promote it's Abolition.*

Lord JOHN RUSSEL said, that, although it gave him much anxiety, he must vote against the Abolition. He was ready to admit, that the ideas attached to Slavery were repugnant to

our feelings; yet he conceived, that all the advantages that were supposed to result from the present motion, would prove visionary and delusive. It was only a feeble attempt, without the power, to serve the cause of humanity. We might relinquish the Trade; but the consequence would be, that it would be taken up by other nations. The African Slave-Trade, his Lordship said, might admit of many regulations; and, whenever a bill of regulation might come forward, no man would be more ready than himself to lend it his support. In this way the rights of human nature might be asserted, without injuring one individual, or the commerce of the kingdom. His Lordship hoped he should not incur very severe censure for what he had said, as he was not sensible of having a *hard heart*, let his *understanding* be what it might. His heart was as free and as *accessible*, as the rights of justice and the cause of humanity required.

Mr. STANLEY (Agent for the Islands) though labouring with an indisposition, thought this an occasion in which he was called upon to refute the many false and malicious calumnies which had, for some years, gone abroad against the Planters in the West India Settlements, and which, having been lately adopted and dispersed from the seminaries of learning, and the pulpits of the church, places that should be employed to better and more useful purposes, had at length produced the mischievous measure that was now under the discussion of the House. Representations had been made of the mischievous consequences of holding any set of people in any situation of slavery whatever; and these declamations came blazoned out to the public in the most high-sounding language, and were urged with as much violence of enthusiasm, as if there never before had been a *Slave* from the days of *Adam* to the present moment. He, on the contrary, maintained, that it appeared to be the intention of Providence, from the system of the Universe, *That one set of men must always be Slaves to another*. This truth was as old as it was universal. It was recognized in every History, and in every *Æra*; under every Government, and in every

every Religion. The Christian Religion itself showed no more repugnance to it than any other; and, in proof of this, he cited the authority of the Bishop of Gloucester (Dr. Halifax) drawn from a passage in St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians; and mentioned other passages as a farther confirmation of his, and the Bishop of Gloucester's, opinion.

He read over a number of documents, and went (though with rather a low voice) into a considerable length of argument to show, that the Slaves were not captured in the manner described. It being the nature of all Savages to put their prisoners to death, he thought they ought to be thankful for being led into a state of captivity, where their condition was much meliorated.

He also represented the stories, concerning their distresses in the Middle Passage, as exaggerations and falsehoods; and as to their treatment in the West Indies, he was himself witness that it was, in general, highly indulgent and humane.

With regard to the possibility of encouraging their increase, by any other means or a better mode of treatment, he earnestly prayed of Gentlemen to let him know how that could be effected. As a Planter, he would thank them for it; and he was sure that if it could be made to appear practicable, neither he nor any of his brother Planters, would ever wish to purchase another Slave. It was absurd to suppose that any set of men could be so blind to their own interest, as not to use the natural means of obtaining Slaves, if it was in their power. It was very well known that one Creole Slave was worth two Africans; and, setting humanity quite out of the question, their interest must suggest that the propagation of Slaves was a better mode of increasing their stock, than the constant purchase of imported Negroes, of whom, he confessed, that *one half very frequently died in the SEASONING.*

He then argued the impossibility of Beasts doing the work of the Plantations; and amongst other reasons, he observed, that it would be impossible to supply them with food. A great part of the food, used by the Negroes and Whites also, was imported: it frequently happened, that, for eight months together, there was not a shower of rain in many of the islands. Their
grain

grain was obliged to be kiln-dried for preservation, and the idea of feeding a considerable number of cattle was, therefore, quite out of the question.

Mr. Stanley, after having gone through a considerable detail of observations, concluded by objecting to the motion.

Mr. WILLIAM SMITH then rose, and began by intreating the Committee to do him the justice to believe, that he would trespass on their patience for as short a time as the nature of what he had to say would permit: but that, notwithstanding the able and eloquent manner in which the subject had been opened by his Honourable Friend, with whom he had long had the satisfaction of being a fellow-labourer in the cause, he should still have occasion to go into some detail; and as he was aware it would be but unentertaining, it was the more necessary for him to request their indulgence.

It had not been his intention to have taken the least notice of the argument attempted to be drawn from *Scripture*, in support of the Slave-Trade, because, although he had seen it urged in some *pamphlets*, it had always appeared to him so extremely absurd and superficial, as to be totally undeserving of any reply. He thought it adapted merely *ad captandum vulgus*, to impose on those who never took the trouble of thinking; and he had imagined, that Gentlemen would have had more respect to the discernment of the Committee, than to have brought it forward there. Nor, though the Honourable Gentleman who spoke last, had adverted to it, could he suppose, for a moment, that the good sense of the House could be misled by a few perverted or misapplied passages of Scripture, in direct opposition to the whole tenor and spirit of Christianity, to the *theory* he might say, of almost every Religion which had ever appeared in the world. Whatever might be ingeniously advanced in debate, every man *must feel*, that the Slave-Trade could not exist an hour, if that excellent maxim, which lies at the very basis of Christian Morality, "To do unto others as we would that others should do unto us," had it's proper influence on the conduct of men.

The Honourable Gentleman had equally surprised him, Mr. Smith said, by another of the arguments on which he had appeared to rely, the weakness of which was equally apparent;—"The Antiquity and Universality of Slavery." It was impossible not to see, that, from the mere existence of any practice, not even a presumption could be formed, in favour of it's justice or propriety. By this argument (if indeed it deserved that appellation) every vice and crime might be defended, which had disgraced mankind from the days of Cain, the first murderer, to the present times.—The Slaves of Antiquity, however, he observed, even under all the hardships they suffered, were in a situation far preferable to that of Negroes in the West Indies. The state of Slavery then was not so degrading as that in which the wretched Africans are held in these modern times: and a word, "Paterfamilias," used by the Honourable Gentleman, had reminded him of a passage which exemplified this, in the strongest manner; "*Domini*," says Macrobius, "*a majoribus nostris, PATRESFAMILIAS, servi FAMILIARES appellati sunt; quod vellent, iis vocibus, a Domino omnem inviam, a Servo omnem contumeliam, detrahere.*" "Our Ancestors denominated the Master, *Father of the Family*, and the Slave *Domestic*; with the intention of removing all odium from the condition of the Master, and all contempt from that of the Servant."—Could this language be applied to the present state of West Indian Slavery?

It had been complained of, by many Gentlemen who espoused the opposite side of the question, that, in supporting their cause, they laboured under very great disadvantages; and among others, that they had to contend against the most splendid abilities which the nation could boast. Though he was as little disposed as any man, Mr. Smith said, to depreciate those admirable talents, on both sides of the House, which were so honourably united on this occasion, in favour of justice and humanity; yet he knew that, amongst his antagonists also, were men of great ability, which, he doubted not, would be exerted to the utmost in defence of the opinions they had adopted. But there was *one* disadvantage, under which those Gentlemen laboured, of great weight, indeed; arising from the nature of their cause, and

for which no talents could compensate;—the impossibility of maintaining their ground fairly, on any of those principles which every man within those walls had been accustomed, from his infancy, to venerate as sacred. He, and his friends, Mr. Smith said, had lain under some disadvantages also: a ridiculous charge of fanaticism had been alledged against them, which he regarded as totally unworthy of any formal reply. It would be more than sufficient to quote, in answer, the words of Mr. Long, the Historian of Jamaica, where, addressing himself to those Planters who were desirous of attempting improvements in cultivation, &c. he advises them, “Not to be diverted by partial views, vulgar prejudices, or the *ridicule which might spring from weak minds*, from a benevolent attention to the public good.” Neither by such, Mr. Smith said, nor by any other, considerations, would he, or those gentlemen with whom he had the honour to act, ever be diverted from the prosecution of their purpose. *They were convinced of the rectitude and high importance of their object, and were determined never to desist from the Pursuit, till the End should be completely attained.*

But they had to struggle with some difficulties far more serious. The West Indian interest which opposed them, was a collected body, and of great power, arising, not merely from extensive mercantile connections, but also from the respectable characters of many of the individuals, and the high estimation in which they stood with the world. He was happy to be able, from intimate acquaintance, to bear his testimony to the justice of this opinion, in numerous instances; and one of the most fruitful and frequent sources of the hardships and injuries which the Slaves endured, was, he doubted not, the absence of such Masters, whose inclination would coincide with their interest, to attend to and protect them.

Artifice had also been employed, and unfair statements, on various points, had been used, to impose on the House; and on the Public. The *Abolition* of the Slave Trade, and the *Emanicipation* of the Negroes now in the Colonies, had been so often, so long, and so pertinaciously confounded, and by some too, who, must have been better informed, that he could not avoid believing it had been purposely done, with the intent of throwing
odium

odium on this measure: and, with the same view, it's supporters had also been unjustly accused of having given birth to the late insurrection in Dominica. A revolt certainly had happened there; but that Island was known to be particularly liable to such disorders; they had frequently occurred before:—nor, if this question had never been agitated, would it have been at all improbable, that, in the course of three or four years (during which period the business had been under consideration) such an event should have taken place in one or other of the Islands. But he was peculiarly happy in having to oppose, to any such groundless accusations, the authority of the Honourable Gentleman who spoke last (Mr. Stanley) who, even in an attempt to fix the charge, had related circumstances which amounted to an entire exculpation. He had expressly said, that all had remained quiet till the disturbances took place in the French Islands, after which some of *their* Negroes, and *some other persons*, from some other places (but *who*, or from *whence*, it did not appear that the Honourable Gentleman knew) had found their way into Dominica, and had excited an insurrection. And the Honourable Gentleman, as if *anxious* entirely to clear the movers of this question from any share of the imputed blame, had farther said, that the Negroes now in the Islands *knew* the British Parliament *did not* intend to emancipate them, and were therefore dissatisfied with the attempt to abolish the Trade, by which they imagined they should be subjected to increased hardships. It must, therefore, on that ground, be absurd to pretend, that the resistance of their Masters to the Abolition they deprecated, could excite their resentment, or dispose them to revolt.

Other fallacies had also been propagated, Mr. Smith said, in order to enhance the importance of the African and West Indian Trades to this country. Of the African Trade, it had been falsely said, that the exports amounted annually to a million sterling; whereas, from the report on the table, it appeared, that, at no period, had they ever risen to 900,000*l.* and on an average, had amounted to little more than *half* a million; which included also, the articles intended for the purchase of African produce, the return for which was about 140,000*l.* per annum.

The House had been informed, two years ago, by a Mr. King, that one Merchant in London had sent goods to Africa, to the amount of 100,000*l.* in a year; in which, however, *the value of the ships was included*—an attempt at exaggeration so gross, that he was sure, had it been remarked at the time, the evidence would have been rejected with indignation; and indeed the testimony of any person, attended with such a circumstance, could not but be regarded throughout, with a degree of suspicion.

The East India Trade was also said very much to depend on the West Indian and the African. The exports of East Indian Commodities to the West Indies was trifling; and a principal point in which that Trade might be said to be connected with the African, was this—Saltpetre, the main ingredient in the manufacture of Gunpowder, was largely imported from the East Indies; and of 2,700,000 pounds weight of Gunpowder, which had been exported in a year from this country, to *all the world*, ONE HALF was sent to Africa alone; for the purposes, doubtless, of maintaining peace and encouraging civilization among it's various tribes! Following the same line of argument, 4 or 5000 persons were reported to depend, for their very existence, on the *particular* manufacture of Guns for Africa; and this branch of the trade was described as *totally different* from every other. —In what the difference consisted, the informant omitted to mention; but that defect was supplied, by one of the witnesses, who had repeatedly seen Negroes maimed by the *bursting* of these Guns, and who had been told by them, That they killed more from the Butt than from the Muzzle. Another witness had stated, That on the *Sea coast*, the Natives are afraid to fire a *Trade-gun*.

In the West Indian Commerce, 240,000 tons of shipping, and 21,000 seamen, were stated to be employed; but here again Deception intruded itself. This account was not, as Gentlemen might imagine, that of the ships engaged in the intercourse between Great Britain and her Colonies only; but included every vessel, small and great, which went from the British West Indies to the Continent of America, and to the foreign Islands; and, what was yet more unfair, in order to swell the sum, it

included too, all the *repeated voyages* of *each*, throughout the year. The *actual* quantity of shipping, Mr. Smith said, occupied in the West Indian Trade, both from Great Britain *and Ireland*, little exceeded *half* that which had been asserted; nor did the number of sailors, supported by that Trade alone, amount to 10,000!

In a similar manner, had the Islands themselves been over-rated. While, from official documents, their value had been computed, for the information of his Majesty and the Privy Council, at 36 millions, the Planters had thought proper almost to double the sum, and estimate them at 70. The truth, however, might possibly lie between these extremes. Mr. Smith said, he was sorry to have taken up so much of the time of the Committee on this part of the subject; but that he thought it necessary to observe on, and to expose, misrepresentations so palpable and excessive; while, at the same time, he was very willing to allow, that our West Indian Trade and Dependencies were of so much real importance, as not to require the aid of such exaggeration.

He would next proceed to take notice of various opinions and assertions, which had fallen from different Gentlemen, in the course of the Debate.—The Honourable Member for Liverpool (Col. Tarleton) had disclaimed every attempt to interest the Feelings or Passions of the House, but had desired to call them to *Reason* and to *Accounts*. Many Gentlemen remembered when, “*Question of Feeling*,” was rather an obnoxious phrase; but, if ever there were a question of *Feeling*, a question which ought to interest the best and noblest Feelings of the human heart, Mr. Smith said, it was this; but that he did not wish to have the point decided on that ground *alone*. He also desired to draw the attention of the Committee to Reason and Accounts—to the voice of Reason, instead of the clamour of Prejudice, and to Accounts, in the place of idle and ill-founded apprehensions. The result, he doubted not, would be a full persuasion, that the measure proposed, was equally sanctioned by Policy, and required by Justice. He indeed, was convinced, that true Policy, and strict Justice, were inseparable; and that no country could suffer, in any of its essential interests, by the

most scrupulous adherence to the principles of rectitude and the dictates of humanity.—In the present case, however, he thought it totally unnecessary to recur to Humanity, as to a principle which might grant what Justice might deny; for that he would concede every point to his adversaries, and utterly abandon his object, if it were not demonstrably clear, that Justice itself, in the most rigid and confined sense of the term, loudly and absolutely demanded the Abolition of this horrible traffic.

The Honourable Gentleman had enlarged on the iniquity of depriving the Traders of Liverpool of a Business, “on which” were founded their Honour and their Fortunes.” On what part of it they founded their *Honour*, Mr. Smith declared, it was impossible for him to conjecture; but, of this he was confident, that no *West Indian* Gentleman, in that Committee, would rise to defend the *Honour* of the African Trade. Among many other circumstances, equally *honourable*, it had appeared, in evidence, that the Agents, employed in actually carrying on this Business, had systematically practised every Fraud and Villainy, which the meanest and most unprincipled cunning could suggest, to impose on ignorance; and yet, with unparalleled assurance, were the Africans accused of Treachery and Deceit—shame on them—with such brilliant examples of integrity before their eyes!

If there were any circumstance, in the course of this proceeding, Mr. Smith said, which he had peculiarly regretted, it was a defect to which the Hon. Gentleman had adverted, that the evidence had not been taken *on oath*. Numberless facts had been related by *Eye-witnesses*, called in support of the Abolition, so dreadfully atrocious, that the very magnitude of the crimes, their horrible enormity, rendered them almost, if not entirely, incredible, to persons acquainted only with such a state of Society, as exists in this country; they seemed rather, to use the expression of Ossian, like “The Histories of the Days of other Times.” This procured for the Trade to which they owed their birth, a species of acquittal which it could not have obtained, had the Committee been authorized to have removed all objection to the validity of their testimony, by the sanction of an oath. He apprehended also, it would have had
the

the farther advantage of making some persons rather more guarded in the testimony they had given. Captain Knox might not then perhaps have told the Committee, that 600 Slaves could have *comfortable* room at night, in his vessel of about 140 tons; when, by a calculation given in, by another of their own witnesses, and strained to the very utmost towards the same point, it appeared, that such a vessel could afford no more than five feet six inches in length, and 15 inches in breadth, to 418 only, or about two thirds of his number; nor, perhaps, would he have maintained that, in another ship of 120 tons, he had carried 130 *tons* of *water only*, besides *five hundred* persons, with sufficient provisions and stores, &c. for them all. Mr. Smith said, the thing was impossible; the most informed knew it was not true, and the most ignorant could not swallow it.—On account of these, and an infinite number of inconsistencies, equally flagrant, which he could mention, he sincerely wished the witnesses had been required to give their evidence on oath.

The next point on which he should observe, Mr. Smith said, was of great consequence, and had been much insisted on—the importance of the Slave-Trade, as a nursery for seamen. In full confirmation of every word which had been asserted on this head, by the advocates of Abolition, and to the confusion of those who had contradicted them, it had appeared, by the Muster-rolls of the Slave-vessels, brought from Liverpool (the production of which would have been avoided if possible) that, considerably more than one fifth part of the men employed in them, actually died in the service, amounting to several hundreds annually, exclusive of very many who were discharged and perished in the West Indies; and yet, the Hon. Colonel had been instructed by his Constituents, to say, that, notwithstanding this vast loss, unheard of, almost impossible, in any branch of legitimate Commerce, it was still a nursery for seamen; for that, of about 3000 men annually sailing from England, 1600, or one-half, were landsmen, and therefore, that, though 600 or 700 should die, a great number of *seamen* were continually forming. Not to dwell on the expensive cruelty of forming these seamen, by the yearly destruction of so many hundreds, whom these Gentlemen of Liverpool seemed entirely to disregard, if they

they could prove them to be only *Englishmen* and not *Sailors*, Mr. Smith said, he was astonished that these people should have no more respect for their Honourable Representative, than to expose him to the unpleasant circumstance of having his assertions directly contradicted by the clearest and most undeniable evidence.—Not only did it appear by the *Muster-rolls* from Bristol, that the proportion of landsmen little exceeded one-twelfth part, but the proper Officers of the Port of *Liverpool itself*, whose business it was to be acquainted with the subject, had, in their answers to the Privy Council, expressly stated the proportion from *thence* to be, not *half*, but *one sixteenth* part only! In the face, however, of the most glaring facts, some persons had been sufficiently bold, or uninformed, also to say, that the mortality in these vessels did not exceed that of other Trades, in the *tropical climates*. The same documents, by which we learn'd that, in this wasting Traffic, *23 per cent.* of the men were destroyed, informed us, that even in the *West Indian Ships*, only about *1½ per cent.* were lost, including every casualty; and indeed he should very much alter his opinion of the value of the latter Commerce, if it were possible for human ingenuity to prove it equally destructive. But the very men, under whose management this mortality had been constantly occurring, for a succession of years, *coolly* informed us, that much of it might be avoided by proper regulations. He would be glad to know then, Mr. Smith said, for how much *they* would have to answer, who, knowing this, had neither publicly proposed, nor in their practice adopted, such regulations. Exclusive of another and a *more serious* account, which they would have to render, on *them* their country had a right to charge the destruction of multitudes of their fellow-citizens! They were not, *they could not be*, ignorant of what was perpetually under their observation; but their whole souls were occupied with another object; their attention was alone directed to the ultimate profit of the voyage; and, *any farther than as it diminished their expences*, the waste of a perishing crew was a trifle beneath their concern!

Objections had been raised to a calculation brought forward by his Honourable Friend (Mr. Wilberforce) on a former occasion,

caſion, in which the average loſs of the *Slaves* on board was ſtated at $12\frac{1}{2}$ *per cent*. It was not, he ſaid, of great conſequence whether that proportion was perfectly exact. He was himſelf perſuaded, that, taking in all circumſtances, the Hon. Gentleman had not exceeded the truth; but that, for a ſeries of years, not leſs than *one tenth* had ſo periſhed, he would challenge thoſe concerned in the Traffic to diſprove. Much evidence had been produced on the ſubject; but both the perſons and the voyages had been generally ſelected by thoſe who poſſeſſed almoſt all the information, nor had any one of them thought it *prudent* to diſcloſe the black catalogue of Death, throughout the whole ſeries of his concerns, except Mr. Anderſon of London, a Gentleman, he believed, of very fair reputation, and *whoſe* engagements in this line had been *very inconfiderable*. His loſs, indeed, on the trifling number he had exported, had been only 3 *per cent*; but, unfortunately for the credit of the Slave-Traders of Liverpool and Briſtol, it appeared, on the face of the account he had delivered, that his veſſels had not taken above 3 *fourths* of *that number* in proportion to the tonnage, which *they* had uniformly and repeatedly ſtated to be *absolutely neceſſary to the very exiſtence of their Trade*; and it appeared alſo, that a commerce in the produce of the country was Mr. Anderſon's favourite object.

Another Honourable Gentleman (Mr. Groſvenor) had, on the preceding day, attributed the protraction of this buſineſs to thoſe who had introduced it; but very forgetfully and erroneouſly: for, Mr. Smith ſaid, notwithſtanding the eagernels which it's enemies had frequently expreſſed to bring on the deciſion, the original motion for farther evidence, beyond that contained in the Privy Council's Report, which firſt occaſioned delay, was *their's*. And, in the examination of witneſſes, in the laſt Parliament, *they* had occupied by far the largeſt portion of the time employed; while, in the preſent Seſſion, when he and his friends had not been much interrupted, they had not exceeded the limits which the Houſe had aſſigned them. The Honourable Gentleman had farther ſaid, that Great Britain had the ſame right, by Natural Law, to carry on this Trade, that any other nation poſſeſſed; that it was *impoſſible* to abolish

it; and that the Committee had better be easy and quiet, for that *they* were happy. His first position, Mr. Smith did not mean to deny. We *undoubtedly* possessed a right to the Trade *equal to that of any other nation*; but what that right could be, he was unable to imagine; nor had he been so fortunate as to discover the *Law* on which it was founded, in any code or system, of *natural*, or any other law, with which he had ever met. As to *impossibility*, none certainly existed of forbidding the farther importation of Slaves into our own Colonies, and beyond this the Motion did not extend.

To the Honourable Gentleman's last observation, he would reply, that it was not on account of any supposed unhappiness of Parliament, that it was called on to decide the question. In their individual situations, Gentlemen undoubtedly were happy; but did it, therefore the less behoove them to consider the happiness of others? And, was the state of Africa happy? Was the situation of the Slaves a happy one? The Trade was replete with fraud, cruelty, and rapine. The facts were acknowledged, and on record: even Mr. Long, before quoted, confessed, "That, in Africa it was certainly the custom to go to war, for the purpose, of making Slaves."—To deny these charges, had been truly owned by Mr. Edwards, *even in the Assembly of Jamaica*, to be no better than "*Mockery and Insult*." That it was indeed mockery and insult, Mr. Smith said, he would never cease to repeat in the ears of every one who should attempt to contradict what had been so incontestibly proved; and, for himself, he was ready to declare, that, as an Englishman, he should never be happy, while he considered his country as contributing, by persevering in this Traffic, to perpetuate misery, and to encourage the commission of every species of crime!

From the concession of his Honourable Friend, of the already meliorated state of the Slaves in our Colonies, and his assertion that an increase was actually begun, it had been argued, that *immediate* Abolition would be a violent, and, therefore, an imprudent, measure; and that it might affect public credit. But surely nothing could be plainer than that an increase commenced, was the best possible *Answer* to the charge
of

of *Violence*, as it precluded all danger of injury to the Islands, unless from their own subsequent misconduct; and (though he would cheerfully and confidently commit the question of *Public Credit* into the hands of a Right Honourable Gentleman) yet, he could not avoid observing, that that argument was, like many others, indeed, which Gentlemen had used, a mere *petitio principii*—an assumption of the great point of the controversy.

In what remained for him to observe, Mr. Smith said, he should proceed with the less satisfaction, as a wide difference of opinion might lead him to treat very lightly the arguments of his Honourable Friend, who had opened the Debate of that day (Sir William Young) by whom, however, he knew he should be acquitted of any personal disrespect. The Honourable Baronet, with some other Gentlemen, acknowledging the object aimed at, to be in itself highly praiseworthy and desirable, had argued against the proposed measure, on the ground of it's inefficacy to the attainment of the end; for, that, though we might instantly *abandon* the Trade, it was impossible for us totally to suppress it. Allowing then this impossibility of a total and immediate suppression, were there no important advantages to be gained by our dereliction of the Commerce? Whether we considered our own honour, or the probable efficacy of example, would it be nothing publicly to recognize and establish a great and just principle of conduct, in an affair of such vast moment? In the extermination of every evil, and especially of those which were fortified by the sanction of time and authority, it was necessary that some one should lead the way. Let the British Parliament then, as became the Senate of a virtuous and enlightened people, bear it's decided testimony against this flagrant iniquity: let it maintain it's foremost rank among the Nations, by setting a noble example, and he would not affront the House by the supposition, that it's conduct would have no influence on the other countries of Europe. But should all feelings of honour, or of generous emulation, in such a cause, fail to operate, he doubted not that France, and Spain, and Holland, and Denmark, would soon learn, from our experience, that, by proper management, such as it was no less the duty

than the interest of every country to enforce, American Colonies could be cultivated without the necessity of continual supplies, equally expensive and disgraceful. Nay, he was perfectly convinced, from a long and careful investigation, that, in most of the Islands, it was merely the existence of this supply which prevented the actual increase from being, even now, perceived.

The reasoning of the Honourable Baronet, on the contrary, he was sorry to think, tended to the perpetuation of the abuse; as universal concurrence in any political measure, however wise, was not to be expected. Every man knew that the custom of selling their prisoners of war into Slavery, existed among even the most civilized States of Antiquity; and no one was so chimerical as to imagine, that it would ever have ceased, had it been necessary to have waited for its Abolition till all nations, in general assembly, had renounced it by mutual consent. But we might do more than merely lay down principles, or propose examples: we might, *in fact, diminish the Evil* itself immediately, by no inconsiderable part—the whole of our own supply; for he could not at all agree with the Honourable Baronet, in what seemed to him a commercial paradox, that taking out of an open trade, by far the largest customer, and lessening the consumption of the article, would increase both the competition and the demand, and, of course, all those mischiefs which *he allowed* to be the uniform consequences. Nor could he admit, in exculpation of this Trade, that it ought not to be made answerable for those acts of barbarity with which the wars of Savages always were, and ever had been, stained; or that, by its *kind* interference, many were only doomed to perpetual Slavery, who would otherwise be consigned to destruction. He should have considered these cruelties as affording another, and a most powerful, motive, for putting a period to a *certain* and *acknowledged cause* of these wars, rather than as a reason for suffering the cause to exist, for the sake of an uncertain and disputable alleviation of the evils it occasioned. And, That the civilization of the Africans was promoted by their intercourse with the Europeans, as at present conducted, was utterly void of all foundation, had appeared most undeniably from the tenour
of

of the evidence. In dress, in manners, and in *dishonesty*, they had, indeed, assimilated much with those who frequented their coasts; but the greatest degree of industry, and the least corruption of morals, generally prevailed where they were least acquainted with the benefits of this *civilizing* connection.

To relieve the Continent of Africa from the miseries occasioned by famine, was another of the benign reasons for continuing to excite wars, and to carry off it's inhabitants. That famines had sometimes occurred, he did not doubt; that they were either very frequent or very destructive, the proof was extremely slender indeed; but that they should annually visit those devoted countries, and with such arithmetic exactness as to render necessary a remedy so violent in it's execution, but so uniform in its quantity, was a circumstance most extraordinary—so wonderful indeed, that, could it once be proved, he should consider it as a far better argument in favour of the *divine approbation* of the Slave-Trade, than any which had ever yet been produced.

As to the effect of the Abolition in the West Indies, Mr. Smith said, he was convinced, notwithstanding the arguments which had been urged, that so far from being ruinous, it would give weight to every humane regulation which had been, or should be, made; by substituting a certain and an obvious interest, in the place of one depending on chances and calculation. An Honourable Gentleman had said, that, were the Planters but convinced of the *possibility* of cultivating their estates, without farther importations of Negroes, they would be happy to be freed from the heavy expense of purchasing those supplies. This conviction, Mr. Smith said, he believed, might be attained, if their *reason* alone required it: for, of all the legion of authorities which the Honourable Gentleman had brought to prove the impossibility for which he contended, there was scarcely one, which might not be pressed to serve more effectually against him. Almost every Planter he had named, had found his Negroes *increase* under the good treatment he professed to have given them.—And, in the Islands of Barbadoes and Dominica, if, on the one hand, the proper usage of Slaves had been proved by the respective Governors, it was

also at least equally incontrovertible, from the evidence, that importations were not requisite to keep up their numbers. To the same point, and with equal ill success, Lord Macartney, who had resided three years in the West Indies, and whose character he highly respected, had been quoted; and what had his Lordship said on the subject? When the question was first put to him, in the Committee, Whether it would be prudent to abolish the Slave-Trade, his Lordship had answered, That he was an incompetent judge. His Lordship was asked the same question a second time, and gave the same answer. Yet his Lordship, it was evident, knew just as much of the business as several other Governors and Military persons who had been called, who, nevertheless, in support of preconceived opinions, had spoken very *decidedly*, from very incompetent information. Nor had some other Gentlemen been more cautious.—Of the great Island of Jamaica, which contained more than one half of the Slaves in the West Indies, it had been seriously asserted, by several witnesses, that *all possible means* had been there used to keep up the stock by breeding, although it was allowed, that the Morals of the Slaves had been totally neglected, and that the Sugar Planters preferred buying a larger proportion of males than females; both which circumstances were acknowledged to be, in a high degree, unfavourable to population.

The great misfortune was, that *Prejudice*, not Reason, was the enemy to be subdued; and he was sorry to say, that the prejudices of the West Indians, on these points, were numerous and inveterate. An Historian of their own body, speaking of the various difficulties raised against any proposed improvements, had described them in terms, which *he* could scarcely have used, without incurring their resentment; as “*absurd*,” “*antiquated*,” and even “*detestable*,” and yet, that, with respect to the *Negroes*, this Gentleman himself was under the influence of the blindest prejudice, his own words afforded irrefragable proof,—He characterised them *generally*, as replete with the extreme degree of every evil quality, unallayed with the smallest mixture of any good whatsoever; and justified the practice of confining them in chains on board the African ships, on account of their “*bloody, cruel, and malicious dispositions* :”

sitions." And though, after having given an account of some of the Aborigines of Jamaica, who had " miserably perished in " caves whither they had retired to escape the tyranny of the " Spaniards," he added, in language worthy of an enlightened and philosophic historian, " leaving a glorious monument of " their having disdained to survive the loss of their liberty and " their country," he was yet incapable of perceiving, that this natural love of liberty might operate as strongly and as laudably in the African Negro, as in the Indian of Jamaica.

He was yet more concerned to acknowledge, Mr. Smith said, that these prejudices were farther strengthened by resentment against those persons who had brought forward, to the public eye, circumstances, by which the state of Legislation and of Society in the West Indies, was undoubtedly deeply disgraced; and who had, to use their expressions, impertinently interfered in the management of their concerns. He was not at all surprised that men of reputation, of honour and of humanity, should feel quick resentments at finding themselves involved, to a certain degree, in the disgrace of crimes, of which they knew themselves incapable; and the commission of which, many, for want either of information or attention, were disposed to disbelieve or even to deny.

In exculpation of his friends and himself, Mr. Smith said, he must tell such Gentlemen, that the relations which had been given were no less disgraceful than *true*, and that, on this head, they had proceeded, not wantonly, but tenderly, in the business—that the facts which, out of many others, had appeared, they had thought it absolutely necessary to produce, not with the view of fixing an unmerited stigma, either on the whole body of West Indians, or much less on innocent and valuable individuals; but to prove the degraded and neglected state in which the Slaves had been suffered to exist: which had incontrovertibly appeared, not from any evidence that *extreme* ill treatment was the *general system*, but from the *frequency*, the *notoriety*, and, beyond all, the *impunity*, of various species both of legal, and of illegal abuse.

That they were exposed to much misery in consequence of their situation, was not only true in fact; it might have been
previously

previously asserted, without fear of contradiction, from a knowledge, of their circumstances, and of the pernicious effects of arbitrary power on the hearts, even of the best of men. Far worse consequences might reasonably be expected, as an Honourable Gentleman had well observed, from a union of the three characters of Party, Judge, and Executioner, too often in men unprincipled, uneducated, and prompted by interest also, to acts of severity. The Slave too, was more unfortunately situated even than the brute; as, being capable, from the superiority of his nature, of exciting, in a higher degree, the passions of his tyrant, he was liable to experience more violent effects of his resentment. And *such* effects were sometimes produced, and *openly exhibited* as would, in this country, excite a tumult of detestation and abhorrence. General Tottenham had given in evidence, that, in 1780, in the public streets of Bridgetown, the capital of Barbadoes, he met one of the most deplorable objects which the human eye perhaps ever beheld. "A youth about nineteen," to use his own words, "entirely naked, with an iron collar about his neck, having five long projecting spikes—his body, both before and behind, was covered with wounds; his belly and thighs were almost cut to pieces, with running ulcers all over them, and a finger might have been laid into some of the wheals. He could not sit down because his hinder part was mortified, and it was impossible for him to lie down on account of the prongs of his collar." He came to the General and supplicated for relief which, of course, was granted. The General asked him who had inflicted on him so dreadful a punishment? It was plainly not the Judicial Authority who had inflicted it. Could any Court have given such a sentence, they would have been hunted like wild beasts from the face of the earth! The youth told the General, "it was his Master who had inflicted the wounds;" and because he then *could not* work, this Master, in the same spirit of perversion which extorts from Scripture a justification of the Slave-Trade, had fulfilled the Christian and Apostolic maxim, by giving him nothing to eat. If, Mr. Smith said, to use the language of Mr. Ross, he wished to "harrow up their feelings," he could quote many other instances. But he had selected this, as equally horrible in it's nature, and indisputable in it's authority:

and

and the point to which he directed it was, to show the wretched state of the Slaves, and to prove that there must be something fundamentally wrong in the Laws and State of a Society, where such a circumstance could *publicly* exist at all, much less *unpunished*, and almost unregarded. If, in the streets of London, but a dog were to be seen lacerated like this poor, miserable *man*, how would the cruelty of the wretch be execrated who should have so abused even a brute?

Mr. Smith then said, he was very sorry to have occupied so much of the time of the Committee; but, in order to give Gentlemen, in one view, the strongest proof he was able, of the low estimation in which Negroes were held, from the strength of old customs, and deeply rooted prejudices, and of their debased and unprotected state, he would take the liberty, before he sat down, to relate two circumstances, *in contrast*, with a few observations. Mr. Edwards, in his speech before the Jamaica Assembly, having occasion to mention a "Rebellion," (*as it is called*) of the Negroes, very pathetically told the following Story:

"The Rebels surrounded the dwelling-house, and seized
 " their unhappy mistress. She was young, beautiful, meek,
 " modest and unoffending, and was in bed with a lovely infant,
 " when the bloody Savages demanded her person. Resistance
 " and prayers were equally fruitless. The female Slaves who
 " attended her, dared not to express their pity, if pity they felt;
 " but, having thrown a loose robe over her, delivered the
 " miserable victim into their hands, and she heard the Savages
 " calmly deliberate on the means of putting her to death in torment. It happened, however, that her person and appearance excited the appetite of the Ringleader, who declared
 " he would preserve her to be his Mistress. The others reluctantly consented, and the next object of their cruelty was
 " the child, which they devoted to instant destruction. Nature
 " now resumed her seat, in the bosom of the unfortunate mother. She screamed aloud, and clasping the knees of him
 " who had spared her life, implored him to save her infant.
 " She implored in vain. Holding up the poor babe by the feet
 " in the Mother's sight, they cleft it in twain with a hatchet."

Mr.

Mr. Edwards proceeded to say, " that his audience would probably think, after hearing the account which he had then read, that no punishment could be too severe—no torments too great, for such horrible excesses. Nevertheless, he was of a different opinion; he thought that simple death, unaccompanied with any circumstances of cruelty, should be the utmost exertion of human authority over our unhappy fellow-creatures."

Torments, however, in these cases, always had been inflicted, of the most horrible nature: the punishment used to be *gibbetting alive*, exposing them to perish by the gradual effects of hunger, thirst, and a parching sun; in which situation they had been known to suffer the most excruciating agonies for nine days, with a fortitude scarcely credible, never uttering a single groan. And yet, without any attempt to lessen the mingled sentiment of horror and compassion, which every one must feel, or to justify the barbarity of their conduct; it ought to be remembered, that these excesses were committed by ignorant Savages, who had been dragged from all they held most dear, whose patience had been exhausted by a cruel and loathsome confinement during their transportation, and their resentment wound up to the highest pitch of fury, by the Driver's lash, the utmost severity of which, their reluctance to labour (for strangers and oppressors) had doubtless excited.

The other story, Mr. Smith said, which he should place in contrast with the affecting narrative he had just related, was the plain, unornamented tale of a common seaman, who was an eyewitness to the fact, on board a slave-ship; and he then read as follows, in the words of the evidence: " A child of about ten months old took fulk, and would not eat. The Captain took up the child, and flogged him with a cat—" D—n you," said he, " I'll make you eat, or I'll kill you." From this, and other ill treatment, the child's legs swelled, and the Captain ordered some water to be made hot, for abating the swelling." But even his tender mercies were cruel; for " the cook putting his hand into the water, said it was too hot. 'D—n him,' said the Captain, ' put his feet in.' " The child was put into the water, and the nails and skin came
" all

“ all off his feet. Oiled cloths were then put round them. The child was then tied to a heavy log, and two or three days afterwards, the Captain caught it up again and said, ‘I will make you eat, or I will be the death of you.’ He immediately flogged the child again; and, in a quarter of an hour, it *died*.”—One would have imagined, that the most savage cruelty would here have been satiated; but, extraordinary as it might appear, of this detestable transaction the most detestable part yet remained. After the infant was dead, he would not suffer any of the people on deck to throw the body overboard, but called the *Mother*, the wretched *Mother*, to perform this last sad office to her murdered child. Unwilling, as it might naturally be supposed she was, to comply, “ he beat her,” regardless of the indignant murmurs of her fettered countrymen, whom, in the barbarous plenitude of secure tyranny, he permitted to be spectators of this horrible scene—“ he beat her, till he made her take up the child and carry it to the side of the vessel, and then she dropped it into the sea, turning her head the other way, that she might not see it!” Mr. Smith asked the Committee if ever they had heard of such a deed? (*on which some inconsiderate few laughed*) and on hearing it, he declared, with great indignation, that he should not have thought it possible for any one man in that Committee, to have betrayed such total want of feeling, and that he was almost ashamed of being a Member of the *Assembly*, in which so disgraceful a circumstance had happened. But it would naturally be asked, “ Was not this CAPTAIN also gibbeted?” Alas! although the execrable barbarity of the European exceeded that of the Africans, almost as much as his opportunities of instruction had been greater than their’s, no notice whatsoever was taken of this horrible action; and ten thousand similar cruelties had been committed in this abominable Trade, with equal impunity. Here, indeed, was the point to be most censured and lamented; for, if the perpetrators had been brought to justice, he should not have thought the facts themselves more deserving of being forced on the unwilling attention of the House, than the cruelty of a Brownrigg, who had been execrated and punished; or than that of the man who murdered his wife the last

week, who, he hoped, would also suffer the punishment due to his crime. What excited his indignation and regret, Mr. Smith said, was, that those (and they were not a few) who, in the prosecution of the African Trade, had been guilty of such enormities, had escaped with absolute *impunity*; and, that, if in the West Indies, a bright exception had occasionally happened in favour of Justice, the instances were too rare, and the punishments too inadequate to the offence, to produce any beneficial effect. On these grounds, therefore, among others, he should give his decided and cordial vote for *immediate* Abolition, as that which, in his opinion, alone afforded the prospect of an adequate remedy for the dreadful disorders which prevailed in Africa; for the cruelty and destruction of the Middle Passage; and would tend, though gradually, yet more efficaciously than any other plan which could be devised, to meliorate the situation of the Negroes now in the Islands, who at present enjoyed scarcely any other protection from the most capricious or severe tyrant, but that of laws, for *them*, almost without sanction, and of Courts, which totally rejected their evidence.

Mr. COURTENAY said, that he had heard, last night, the eloquent, pathetic and forcible speech, of the Honourable Mover of the question, with much sympathy and conviction; nor had his sentiments been at all shaken by any thing that he had heard on the other side.

By way of remark on what had fallen from the Honourable Baronet (Sir William Young) he observed, that it was a mistake to suppose the Slave-Trade, if abandoned by us, would fall into the hands of France. It ought to be recollected, with what approbation the motion for abolishing the Trade, made by the late M. Mirabeau, had been received; although the situation of the French Colonies might not have made it prudent to carry the measure into immediate execution. It was not to be doubted, that, if the Parliament of this country should begin, so wise and enlightened a Body, as the National Assembly, would quickly follow their example. The cause of Justice and Humanity, in both these Nations, now cemented by freedom,

dom, could not long miscarry. But even though the Trade should not be relinquished by others, if Justice required it's Abolition, how could We hesitate as to our own part?

Some Gentlemen had said, that the Trade was conducted on principles of Humanity. Truly it was a new species of Humanity! We rescued them, from what we were pleased to call, their wretched situation at home, and then we took credit for our Humanity, because, after killing one half of them in the Seasoning, we substitute, as we say, a better treatment in the Colonies than that to which they were liable at home!

It had been stated, that the principle of war, among Savages, was a general massacre. This, Mr. Courtenay declared, was not the fact, as would appear from the accounts of travellers. On the contrary, they even frequently adopted the Captives into their own families; and, so far from massacring the women and children, gave them the protection which the weakness of sex or age demanded. There could be no doubt that the practice of Kidnapping prevailed; and, as to the convictions for Adultery and Witchcraft, which were one alledged cause of Slavery, he remarked, that every man being allowed six wives, there could be no great inducement to the crime of Adultery. As to Witchcraft, he observed, that this had been made a crime, in the reign of James the First, in this country, for the purpose of informations; and how much more likely was this to be the case in Africa, under the encouragement, to such convictions, afforded by the Slave-Trade? And, he remarked, that, if the Slave-Trade was sanctioned, as had been said, by twenty six acts of Parliament, he did not doubt fifty six acts might be found, by which Parliament had given it's sanction to Witchcraft.

It had been said, that the pulpit had been used as an instrument of attack on the Slave-Trade. He was happy to learn it had been so well employed; but he rather doubted of this fact, as he believed, some of the Clergy had obtained preferment, for inculcating the doctrine, that the Negroes were predestinated to Slavery. Yet he could not doubt, when the Bill went to the Lords, that the Bishops would rise up, with that brave and

virtuous indignation which became them, to abolish a traffic so contrary to all the principles of Humanity, Justice and Religion.

Mr. Courtenay concluded his Speech, by entreating every Gentleman to recollect, that, on his vote, that night, depended the happiness of millions, and that it was now in his power to promote a measure, of which the benefits would be felt, over one whole quarter of the Globe; that the seeds of civilization might, by the proposed Bill, be sown all over Africa; and the first principles of Humanity be established in regions where they had hitherto not been suffered to prevail.

SIR WILLIAM YOUNG spoke a few words in explanation.

Lord CARYSFORT said, that if he had entertained any doubts on the present question, they would have been removed entirely by the very able arguments used at the introduction of it; though, if possible, he was convinced still more by the manner in which it had been opposed; no one argument, of solid weight, having, in his opinion, been adduced against it. His Lordship spoke of the inadequacy of the Colonial Laws for the protection of the Slaves, and the severity of their punishments. They were ordered to receive thirty-nine lashes, from a cart-whip, for the ordinary offences: but how dreadfully severe and disproportionate was this punishment? They were deprived of the right of self-defence against *any* white man; and the system, in the West Indies, was totally repugnant to the principles of our constitution.

The measure had policy on it's side; for the true interest of every nation consisted in adhering to Justice: and, though other countries should retain the trade, yet, *founded, as it was, in false policy and complete injustice*, there could be no cause to regret our relinquishing it to other hands.

Col. PHIPPS rose, and, the House having become rather impatient for the question, he mentioned the declaration he had made the preceding evening, when the question of adjournment was under consideration. He trusted, That the House would allow him to state the difficulties he felt in agreeing to the Present Motion, assuring them, in return, that he would endeavour to compress his sentiments as much as possible.

It had been asserted, that this was a question in which the Rights of Humanity, and the Laws of Nature were concerned. He could not agree to consider it in that light ; nor did he think that those persons who had formed their opinions on the same ground with himself, were at all deserving of the harsh expressions, used the preceding evening. Sure he was, that he was not less sensible to feelings for the rest of mankind, than any other Honourable Gentleman.

Col. Phipps then described the nature of the Governments of Africa, from whence the Negroes, who were the objects of the Slave-Trade, were originally procured. The African Governments, he said, were not like those of Europe : they were neither limited Monarchies, Aristocracies, nor Democracies. They were founded in absolute Despotism, and every subject was an actual Slave. The great men of the country were Slaves to the Governor, their dependents were Slaves to those great men, and so on, downwards. All their customs, in like manner, were different from those of other countries. The prisoners of war too were subject to Slavery, and, such being the case, he saw no more cruelty in disposing of them to our merchants, than to those of any other nation. The life of any subject of another prince, was forfeitable, if he were taken captive in war. Criminals also, in cases of adultery and witchcraft, were subject to Slavery in Africa.

He observed, that it had been said, in debate, that there were no laws in the West Indies for the protection of the Slaves. He begged leave to deny the fact. There were several laws in being in the Colonies, though he was ready to admit, that farther regulations were necessary, and, he was ready to go, in this respect, as far as ever Humanity might require. He had passed

ten months in Jamaica, where, he declared, he never had seen any such acts of cruelty as were now talked of. Such severities as he had seen, had not been exercised by Planters, or Masters, or Overseers, or any other Whites; but all the cruelties, he had observed, were committed by the Blacks. The dreadful stories that had been read and recited to the Committee, no more ought to fix a general stigma on the Planters, than the story of Mrs. Brownrigg, which had been mentioned, in the course of the debate, ought to stamp this polished Metropolis with the general brand of murder. There was once a haberdasher's wife (Mrs. Nairne) who locked up her apprentice girl, and starved her to death; but did ever any body think of abolishing haberdashery on this account? and he really thought this nearly a parallel case. He said, he was persuaded, the Negroes in the West Indies were, in general, chearful and happy. They were fond of ornaments; and he appealed to the observation of every Gentleman, Whether it was the characteristic of miserable persons to show a fondness for finery? On the contrary, he asked, if it did not imply a chearful, contented mind, when people were desirous of decorating the body.

If, as he trusted would be the case, the Honourable Gentleman should lose his Motion, he was sure his humanity need not be at an end; for it would induce him to employ himself in devising means of providing, as comfortably as possible, for the accommodation of the Negroes, by some provident regulations. After an apology to his Honourable Friend, for differing in opinion from him, Col. Phipps concluded with declaring he should give his negative to the Motion.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER rose, and began his speech by declaring, that, from the first hour of his having had the honour to sit in Parliament, down to the present, among all the questions, whether political or personal, in which it had been his fortune to take a share, there had never been one in which his heart was so deeply interested as the present: both on account of the serious principles it involved, and the important consequences connected with it. He observed, that however forcibly

forcibly he might appeal to the natural and unerring feelings of every man upon this subject, and however strong an argument he might, therefore, draw, even from this consideration, yet this was not the ground on which he was about to rest the determination of the present question.

The present was not a mere question of feeling; it was not for the sake of exercising humanity (as had been often falsely imagined) that the Abolition of the Trade in Slaves was pressed upon the Committee: but it was quite another principle, that ought, in his opinion, to determine their minds—The main argument insisted on was, **THAT THE SLAVE-TRADE WAS FOUNDED IN INJUSTICE**; *And it is, therefore, said Mr. Pitt, such a Trade, as it is impossible for me to support, unless Gentlemen will, in the first place, prove to me, that there are no laws of Morality binding upon Nations, and that it is no duty of a Legislature to restrain it's subjects from invading the happiness of other Countries, and from violating the fundamental principles of Justice.*

He observed, that many Gentlemen, however, who opposed the Motion, had brought forward, on the present occasion, a plea of impracticability. Several of them had even expressed a desire to see the Slave-Trade abolished, if it were not for some necessity for continuing it, which they conceived to exist—Nay, almost every one, he believed, and in particular an Honourable Baronet (Sir W. Young) and another Honourable Gentleman (Mr. Stanley, Agent for the Islands) appeared to wish, that the farther Importation of Slaves might cease, provided it could be made out, That the population of the West Indies could be, by any means, maintained without it.

Mr. Pitt said, that he proposed, therefore, with the permission of the House, to apply himself particularly to this subject; for as this appeared to operate, in the minds of so many Gentlemen, as the chief objection, he trusted, that, by showing this argument to be groundless, and the whole idea of impracticability, as it was now urged, to be entirely a misconception, he should be able thus to clear away every obstacle whatever; so that, having no ground either of justice or necessity, to stand upon, there could be no excuse or pretence left to the Committee, for resisting the present Motion.

He

He might reasonably hope, however, that Gentlemen, even upon their own grounds, would not reckon any disadvantage to the plantations, that was merely *small* and *temporary*, to be a sufficient reason to warrant the continuance of the Slave-Trade.— It was surely not any *slight* degree of expediency, any *small balance of profit* or any *light shades of probability*, on the one side, rather than the other, that would determine any Gentleman in the present question. He asked pardon even for the supposition. The House, he was sure, would not decide the question, on such grounds. The Slave-Trade was an evil of such a magnitude, that there must be a common wish in the Committee at once to put an end to it, if there were no very great and serious obstacle. Nothing short, said he, of the utmost danger, nay of ruin, to the West India Islands, ought we to hear urged as a plea for continuing such a trade as this ! It was a Trade by which multitudes of unoffending Nations were deprived of the blessings of Civilization, and had their peace and happiness invaded. It ought therefore to be no common expediency ; it ought either to be some positive necessity, or, at least, something very like necessity, that it became those Gentlemen to plead, who took upon them to defend the continuance of this Trade.

He knew the West Indian Gentlemen had used very strong language, on this part of the subject, and had expressed an alarm for the Islands that was very serious indeed. It would be proper, however, for the Committee to consider this for themselves ; for he could not help thinking, there was an over great degree of sensibility, among those Gentlemen, on this particular point, and that their alarm, as he hoped to prove, was excited in a way which the occasion by no means justified. He had endeavoured carefully and impartially to examine into this himself, and he would now proceed to lay those reasons before the House, which induced him firmly to believe, not only that no permanent mischief would follow from the Abolition, but not even any such temporary hurt or inconvenience as could be stated to be a reason for preventing the House from agreeing to the question before them : on the contrary, that the Abolition

tion itself would lay the foundation for the more solid improvement of all the various interests of those colonies.

In proceeding upon this subject, he should apply his observations chiefly to Jamaica, which contained more than half the Slaves in the whole West Indies, and, if he should succeed in proving that no material detriment could arise to the population of that Island, this would be so considerable a part of the question, and would afford so strong a presumption with respect to the other Islands (it being a tolerably fair sample of the whole) that the House could not any longer hesitate whether they should or should not put a stop to this most horrid Trade.

In the twenty years, ending in 1788, the annual loss of Slaves in Jamaica (that is, the excess of deaths above the births) appeared to be one in one hundred; in a preceding period, the loss was greater, and, in a period before that, greater still, there having been a continual gradation in the decrease through the whole time, as appeared from an accurate examination of the particular years in each period. It might fairly be concluded, therefore, that (the *average* loss of the last period being one *per cent.*) the loss in the *former* part of it would be somewhat *more*, and in the *latter* part somewhat *less* than one *per cent*; insomuch that it might be fairly questioned, whether, by this time, the births and deaths in Jamaica might not be stated as very nearly equal. It was to be added, that a peculiar calamity, which swept away 15,000 persons, had occasioned a part of the mortality in the last mentioned period; the check to the provision trade, occasioned by the independence of America, had also been urged, by the West India Gentlemen, as a cause of more than common depopulation, in the same time: whether this had really operated to so great an extent as had been stated, he could not exactly say, but he was clear that this also was an evil that might not be expected to return; as a very considerable culture of provisions in the Islands, had now happily taken place. It was plain, then, even on these grounds only, nay, even if the apparent loss had been, as some statements made it, more than one *per cent*, the

probable loss, now to be expected, must be very inconsiderable indeed.

There was, however, one circumstance to be added, which the West India Gentlemen, in stating this matter, had entirely overlooked, and which was so material, as clearly to reduce the probable diminution in the population of Jamaica down to nothing, supposing even that all the observations he had just been making were entirely to fail him. The circumstance he meant was this: In all the calculations he had referred to, of the comparative number of births and deaths, *all* the Negroes in the Island were included; those newly imported Negroes who died in consequence of the seasoning, made a part; and swelled, therefore, very materially, the number of the deaths; but as these extraordinary deaths would cease, as soon as the importation ceased, there ought to be a deduction of them made from his present calculation.

Now this number would make up, of itself, nearly the whole of that one *per cent.* which had been stated, laying aside all the other considerations. He particularly pressed Gentlemen's attention to this circumstance; for it was undoubtedly the fact, that the complaint of being likely to want hands in Jamaica, arose from the mistake of including the *present, unnatural* deaths caused by the seasoning among the *natural and perpetual* causes of mortality. These deaths, being erroneously taken into the Planters' calculations, gave occasion to the idea that the numbers could not be kept up. These deaths, which were caused merely by the Slave-Trade, furnished the very ground, therefore, on which the continuance of the Slave-Trade was thought necessary, became the very reason for bringing over more of these wretched Negroes, and for thus adding to this very source of the mortality.

The evidence before the House, as to this point, was perfectly clear; for it would be found in that dreadful catalogue of deaths, in consequence of the Seasoning, and the Middle Passage, which the House had been condemned to look into, that *one half* die. An annual mortality of 2,000 in Jamaica might be charged, therefore, to the Importation, which compared

pared with the whole numbers on the Island, hardly fell short of the whole one *per cent* decrease.

Joining this with all the other considerations, Mr. Pitt then pointedly asked, *Can* the decrease of Slaves in Jamaica be such—Can the Colonies be so destitute of means—so incapable of those improvements which a more prudent management, and a spirit of benevolence must naturally furnish—Can they, at a time when they tell you of new regulations, to benefit the Slaves, which, they say, are establishing every day—Can they, under all these circumstances, be permitted to plead that total impossibility of keeping up their number, which they have rested on, as being indeed the only possible pretext for allowing fresh importations from Africa? He appealed, therefore, to the sober judgment of every Gentleman in the House, Whether an interest on the part of Jamaica, such as he had described, could form an objection, or justify a hesitation, in agreeing to the present Motion.

It might be observed also, that, when the Importation should stop, that disproportion between the sexes, which was one of the obstacles to population, would gradually diminish, and indeed our whole Colonies in the West Indies would revert to that natural order and course of things by which population and civilization are promoted. Through the want of this natural order, a thousand grievances were created, which it was impossible to define, and which it was in vain to think that, under such circumstances, we could cure. He was convinced the Abolition itself would work this effect. The West Indians would then feel a near and urgent interest, to enter into a thousand little details which it was impossible for him to describe, but which have the greatest influence on population. A foundation would thus be laid for the general welfare of the Islands, a new system would rise up the reverse of the old, and eventually both their general wealth and general happiness would increase.

This, however, it should be remembered, was proving far more than he was bound to, with a view to the present question; for Gentlemen must feel, that if even he could prove the Abolition *not ruinous*, it would be enough. He could give up, there-

fore, three arguments out of four, through the whole that he had said, and yet have enough left to establish his position. As to the Creoles, it was a plain point that they would increase; they differed in this intirely from the imported Slaves, who were both a burthen and a curse to themselves and others. The measure now proposed would operate like a charm, and besides stopping all the miseries we give occasion to in Africa and the Middle Passage, would produce even more benefits in the West Indies than legal regulations could do.

One thing he must touch upon, which was rather a delicate point; the question of emancipating the Slaves in the West Indies. A rash emancipation he was clear would be wrong and mischievous: In that unhappy situation to which *our baneful conduct had brought both ourselves and them*, it would be no justice on either side to give them liberty. They were as yet incapable of it, but gradually their situation might be mended. They might be relieved from every thing harsh and severe, raised from their present degradation, and put under the proper protection of law: *till then, to talk of Emancipation was insanity*. But it was the system of fresh importations that interfered with these principles of improvement, and it was the Abolition of the Slave-Trade that would furnish the means of effectually regulating the situation of the Slaves in the Islands. This was not a warm idea taken up without due reasoning and reflection, but had it's foundation in human nature: Wherever there was the incentive of honour, credit and fair profit, *there* industry would be; and when these labourers should have the natural springs of human action afforded them, they would then rise to the natural level of human industry; but when degraded into mere machines, they would not even afford you all the benefit of machines, but became more unprofitable, and every way more disadvantageous, than any other instrument of labour whatsoever.

Mr. Pitt then proceeded to some short observations on each of the other Islands, as there were some circumstances of difference between them. In Barbadoes there had been no decrease that need alarm us; on the contrary, the Slaves in that Island seemed rather to increase. In St. Kitt's, the decrease for 14 years had been but 3-4ths per cent. and here many of the

same observations would apply, as he had been using in the case of Jamaica. In Antigua, a considerable number had died by a particular calamity; but for this, the decrease would have been really trifling. In Nevis and Montserrat there was this strong and most favourable circumstance, that there was little or no disproportion of sexes, and it might well be hoped the numbers would be kept up. In Dominica, some controversy had arisen about the calculation; but he had to observe, that Governor Orde mentions there is an increase of births above the deaths. From Grenada and St. Vincent's, no good accounts had been transmitted, in answer to the queries sent them; but they were probably not in circumstances less favourable than the other Islands, though perhaps it might be found, that persons who had proceeded on recent grants might be entitled to our consideration; but whether their case was separated from the others or not, it never could be argued that they ought to stand in the way of the great object before the House.

On a full review of the probable state of the Negro population in our West India Islands, was there then, said Mr. Pitt, any serious ground of alarm from the measure of abolishing the Slave-Trade, of abolishing it entirely and immediately? and was there any of that Impracticability to be pleaded, on which alone so many Gentlemen had rested all their objections? Must we not *blush* at pretending it would *distress our consciences* to abolish this most horrid Trade, on account of the alarming consequences to the population of the Islands?

Intolerable were the mischiefs of this Trade, both in it's origin, and through every stage of it's progress. The Honourable Gentleman near him (Colonel Phipps) had been describing Africa as a Continent half cultivated. In such a country, in order to promote this Trade, you must apply yourselves to the avarice and to the worst passions of the Princes. To say that Slaves can be furnished us by fair and commercial means, was absurd and ridiculous. The Trade sometimes ceased, as during the last war, sometimes the demand increased, sometimes it was declining, according to our circumstances. But how was it possible that, to a demand so extremely fluctuating, the supply of Slaves should always exactly accommodate itself?

itself? *Alas! alas!* said Mr. Pitt, we make human beings the subjects of commerce; we learn to talk of them as such; yet we will not allow to them the common principle of commerce, *that the Supply must accommodate itself to the Consumption*. It was not from wars then that the Slaves were chiefly furnished. They were obtained in proportion as they were wanted. If a *Demand* for Slaves arose, a *Supply* was forced in one way or other, and it was in vain, overpowered as we now were with positive evidence, as well as the reasonableness of the supposition, to deny, that, by the Slave-Trade, we were the causes of those dreadful enormities in that unhappy continent. It was plain, if we considered the number annually carried off, that no regular or ordinary means could furnish so many captives.

It was said by an Hon. Baronet (Sir W. Young) that if we did not take them, they would be destroyed; but this he did not believe, because he did not find, from all his reading, that the destruction of their captives was the common practice, as had been stated, of all uncivilized nations. We assumed, therefore, what was false; the very selling them implied this; for if they would *sell their captives for profit*, why should they not *employ them in any labour that would yield a profit*, for the same reason? Nay, many of them, while there was no demand from the Slave Merchants, were often actually so employed. The wealth of the richer people in Africa was reckoned to consist in Slaves, and how could we suppose they would be so absurd, then, as to destroy them? Besides, the Trade *had* been suspended during the war, and it was never said, or thought, that any such consequence had then followed. But even if, instead of the present pitiless transportations, some few lives should be actually destroyed; if at the first they, with the guilt on *their* heads, should put some few prisoners to death, it was clear, in his opinion, that we ought not to make this any reason for persisting in the Trade. The duration of this evil that was dreaded would be short; by degrees the interest of Humanity would work it's own way, if our perverted system did not obstruct it's course.

It had been argued, by the Hon. Baronet, that the selling men for Witchcraft was no consequence of the Slave-Trade,
for

for that Witchcraft commonly implied poison, and was a real punishable crime. But was it recollected, that in the case of Witchcraft or poison, it was not the individual only, but *man, woman and child*, every connection and relation of the guilty person, that were sold for Slaves, which principle of injustice and cruelty was promoted most undoubtedly by the Slave-Trade? The truth was, that we stopt the natural progress of civilization; we cut off Africa from the opportunity of improvement, we kept down that continent in a state of *Darkness, Bondage, Ignorance, and Blood*. Was not this an awful consideration for this country? Look on the Map of Africa; how little useful intercourse had been established in that vast Continent? While other Countries were assisting and enlightening each other, *that* alone had none of these benefits? We had obtained as yet only just so much knowledge of it's productions, as to show that there is a capacity for Trade, which we check. Indeed, if the mischiefs in Africa were out of the question, *the circumstances of the Middle Passage alone* would, in his mind, be reason enough for the Abolition. Such a scene as that of the Slave-ships, passing over with their wretched cargoes to the West Indies, if it could be spread before the eyes of the House, would be sufficient of itself to make them vote at once for this question. And when it can be added also, that the interest even of the West Indies themselves, rests on the Abolition of this Trade, Mr. Pitt said, he could not conceive an act of more indispensable duty than that which was now proposed to the House. If even the consequences had appeared to him widely different from what they did appear, still he should insist that the House ought to give the same vote. What an aggravation then of guilt would it be, if the Policy, instead of being against the measure, was also for it? A more imperious Duty than that of abolishing the Slave-Trade, he believed was never exercised in the Parliament of Great Britain.

Sir ARCHIBALD EDMONDSTONE desired to know, before the question was put, what was the exact purport of it; and whether it went so far as to pledge those who voted for it, to a total and immediate Abolition of the Slave-Trade.

Mr.

Mr. Alderman WATSON pleaded the situation in which he stood, in his capacity of Representative, as a reason that would induce the House to indulge him with a few moments of their time.

The House having become more silent, he proceeded into an argument to show that this Trade was not liable to the objections urged against it. He defended it as highly beneficial to the country, being one material branch of it's commerce. He said that he could not think of the African Trade without connecting, in his mind, the West India Trade with it; for that, in truth, the one hung upon the other. Nor was this all: a third important branch of our commerce entered also, in the same manner, into his consideration, which was the Newfoundland-fishery; and he went into a detail which he concluded by observing, that this most valuable Fishery could not answer to this country, if it were not for the vast quantity of the inferior fish bought up for the Negroes in the West Indies, and which was quite unfit for any other market. He spoke of the mutual dependence, that each of these three Trades had on the other, and of the great importance, in a commercial point of view, of not interfering with the one, lest we should endanger the existence of the others.

He referred also to what had passed in the National Assembly, on the subject of the Slave-Trade, and read part of a Speech of M. Turgot, recommending a gradual Abolition of it, and not one that was, by any means, immediate.

The Alderman recommended it to the House, to follow the same principles, and to soften the rigours of Slavery, by wholesome regulations; but not to adopt so rash a conduct as to vote the immediate Abolition of the Trade in Slaves.

Mr. Fox began his speech by saying, that, at so late an hour, it might be some satisfaction to the House to be assured, that he should not trouble them very long; for the question did not
need

need to be viewed in any great variety of lights, though it was undoubtedly one of the greatest importance.

He observed, that some expressions, which he had used on the preceeding day, had been complained of, as too harsh and severe. He had now had four and twenty hours to reflect on his words, he had revolved them over and over again in his mind, but he could not prevail on himself to retract them; because, the more he considered and knew of the subject in discussion, the more did he believe, that if, after reading all the evidence on the table, and attending to the debate, any Gentleman could continue to oppose the Abolition of the Slave-Trade, and could thus avow himself, after a full knowledge of the subject, an Abettor of this shameful traffic in Human Flesh, it could only be either from some *hardness of heart*, or some such *difficulty of understanding* as he really knew not how to account for.

Some Gentlemen, Mr. Fox observed, had considered this question, as a question of Political Freedom; whereas it was no such thing. No man would suspect him of being an enemy to political freedom; his sentiments were too well known to leave him subject to such a suspicion. But this was a question not of *Political*, but of *Personal* freedom. Political freedom was undoubtedly as great a blessing as any people under Heaven (considered collectively as a people) could pant after, or seek to possess; but political freedom, when it came to be compared with personal freedom, sunk to nothing, and became no blessing at all in comparison. To confound these two, served, therefore, only to render all argument on either, perplexing and unintelligible. It was personal freedom that was now the point in question. Personal freedom must be the first object of every human being, and it was a right, of which he who deprives a fellow-creature, is *absolutely criminal* in so depriving him; and which he who withholds, when it is in his power to restore it, is no less criminal in withholding. Mr. Fox therefore declared, that, though he professed great regard for an Honourable Friend who had complained of his words, and for a noble Lord who sat near him (Lord John Russell) yet un-

less they endeavoured, zealously and sincerely, to put an end to so horrid a violation of personal freedom, as the African Slave-Trade most undoubtedly was, however it might hurt those for whom he felt an affection and respect, yet he could not so far compliment them as to retract his words, or to neglect speaking in the manner which his duty required, upon a subject so serious as the present.

The House being now apprized of the nature of this Trade, having received evidence, having had the facts undeniably established, knowing, in short, *what the Slave-Trade was*, he declared, that if they did not, by the vote of that night, mark to all mankind their abhorrence of a practice so enormous, so savage, so repugnant to all laws, human and divine, it would be more scandalous, and more defaming, in the eyes of the country, and of the world, than any vote which any House of Commons had ever given. He desired them seriously to reflect, before they gave their Votes, what they were about to do that evening. If they voted that the Slave-Trade should not be abolished, *they would, by their Vote that night, give a Parliamentary Sanction to Rapine, Robbery, and Murder*; for a system of rapine, robbery, and murder, the Slave-Trade had now most clearly been proved to be.

After an exordium to this effect, Mr. Fox said, that every Gentleman who had perused the examination of the witnesses, upon the table, must acknowledge, that he had not used one word too strong. He had read the Privy Council's Report some time ago; but owned it was but lately that he had turned his attention to the evidence since taken before the Select Committee; and he regretted that he had not done it sooner; for the facts he there found were such as proved the absolute necessity, on every consideration of morality and justice, of putting an end to a practice, so pregnant with circumstances of terror and alarm to this country.

That the pretence of danger to our West India Islands, from the Abolition, was totally unfounded, Mr. Fox said, the speech of the Honourable Gentleman who introduced the Motion had fully convinced him, but, if it had not, the speech of the Right Honourable The Chancellor of the Exchequer, by which he had,

had, in so masterly a manner, established that point, must have given him complete satisfaction. If there was any thing for him at all to find fault with, in the Right Honourable Gentleman's speech, he should say, that it could only be his dwelling so much on that part of the subject, and bestowing so much eloquence and ability on it; so as to give an air of more importance to the pretexts of the other side, than they at all deserved; thus drawing the Committee's attention from the *Justice* of the question, which was a thing of infinitely greater magnitude.

It had been shown, on a comparison of the deaths and births in Jamaica, that there was not now any decrease; but if there had been, it would have made no difference in his conduct on the subject: for had the mortality been ever so great, he should have ascribed it entirely to the system of importing Negroes, instead of encouraging the breed. If any man were to tell him of a country in which, though horses were used, yet very few were bred, this would not induce him to suppose, there was any unfriendliness, in the climate of that country, to the natural propagation of horses, but merely to it's being found or thought cheaper by the inhabitants, to buy horses than to breed them. It was not his fault, Mr. Fox said, that he was reduced to the degrading necessity of speaking of human beings, as if they were horses.

But what he urged in the case of horses, was evidently the case with Slaves in the West Indies. The climate was declared to be remarkably congenial to them, and to be just like their own. This had been actually pleaded (with a different view indeed) in favour of the Slave Trade—then why should they not breed? It was merely because the West India Planters thought it more convenient, more agreeable to them, or more cheap, to buy them fit for work than to breed them—it was because the Planters did not chuse to treat them with that attention and humanity which would ensure their breeding. What then was the purpose for which this accursed and horrid Trade in human creatures was desired to be kept up? The purpose was this—in order to give the Planters the opportunity of destroying the Negroes on their estates, as fast as they pleased.

The plea on which the Slave-Trade to Africa was to be kept up (if the mortality in the Islands was the plea) could only be in order to indulge the Planters in the liberty of misusing their Slaves, so as to check propagation; for it was from ill usage only that, in a climate so natural to them and so favourable, their numbers could ever diminish. Mr. Fox stated, therefore, that if the mortality in the West Indies, were ten times greater than it was, this would only be a ten times stronger reason for forbidding the importation of Slaves. It would only argue ten times more ill usage than now prevailed, and Parliament would be so much the more loudly called upon to put an end to a system so destructive of human life.

The very ground, therefore, on which the Planters rested the necessity of fresh importations, namely, the destruction of lives in the West Indies, was itself the strongest reason that could possibly be given, for the Abolition of the Trade, and, the more strongly they chose to urge it, the more strongly should he argue from it the necessity of the present measure, and the serious need there was of a parliamentary interference. He observed also, that, if any thing could aggravate the national guilt of the Slave-Trade on the Coast of Africa, it was this same dreadful argument of it's being necessary in order to replace the lives destroyed by our inhuman system of treating them in the West Indies.

After very pointedly remarking on the nature of this, which was the main defence set up on the part of the West Indies, Mr. Fox adverted to some of the instances of cruelty which had been mentioned, and which appeared in actual evidence. He thought that an Honourable Gentleman (Mr. Smith) who had spoken with much sound argument and manly sense, had done well to introduce those stories, which had made such an impression on the House, that they could scarcely bear to be present when such horrid tales were even related. But had the truth of any one of them been controverted? An Honourable Gentleman (Mr. Cawthorne) by way of discrediting the accounts given of the African Captain's cruelty to the child of ten months old, could only say that it was too bad to be true, and that it was impossible: and, in order to discredit the witness,

ness, had bid you look to his cross examination. The Honourable Gentleman, however, had declined turning to the cross examination, the whole of which, Mr. Fox desired the House to observe, amounted to this : that when pressed, in the closest and strictest manner, by some able Members of the House, the only inconsistency they could fix upon him, was a doubt whether the fact had happened on the same day, of the same month, of the year 1764, or the year 1765.

He observed, that absolute power was not denied to be exercised by the Slave Captains, and, if this was granted, such was human nature, that he was persuaded all the cruelties charged upon them would naturally follow. He also remarked, that nothing less than complete arbitrary power, was exercised over the Slaves in the West Indies, and he spoke of the abuse of it, which there, as well as every where else, *must* be the consequence. Never did he hear of any charges exhibited against any set of men, before any Court or Legislature, of so black and horrible a nature, as those contained in the evidence now on the table ; and it became those who laboured under them, to come forward and vindicate their characters to their country.

Many, in short, were the instances of cruelty to which this Trade gave rise ; it was a scene of such iniquity and oppression, in every one of it's stages, that if the House, with all their present knowledge of the circumstances, should *dare* to vote for it's continuance, they must have nerves of which he had no conception. We might find instances indeed in ancient history, of men's violating all the feelings of Nature in some cases of an extraordinary kind. Fathers, said he, have sacrificed their sons and daughters, or husbands their wives ; but if we are to do violence to the feelings of humanity, and in this respect, to imitate their characters, we ought not only to have nerves as firm and strong as the two Brutuses ; but we ought also to take care that we have a *cause as good*, and that we have motives for such a dereliction of our feelings, as patriotic and public spirited as they had.

But what was our motive ?—this Trade, that was so contended for, this wholesale sacrifice of a whole order and race
of

of our fellow creatures, which, in violence to all our feelings, we are asked to vote the continuance of? *It was a traffic for human beings, who were to be carried away by force, from their native country, in order to be subjected to the mere will and caprice, the tyranny and oppression of other human beings, for their whole natural lives, they and their posterity for ever!!*

Mr. Fox then entered into some account of the Trade, tracing it from its first scenes in Africa, through the Middle Passage, to it's conclusion. It was impossible, he said, to consider it in the light of any natural or ordinary commerce. We might, if we pleased, give it the name of a Trade; but it had none of the principles of Trade belonging to it. It was even on the first view obvious, that there could not be a multitude of human beings, at all times, ready to be furnished, in the way of fair articles of commerce, just as our occasions might require. The argument urged by the Right Honourable the Chancellor of the Exchequer upon this head, was perfectly unanswerable. Our *demand was fluctuating*, it entirely ceased at some times, nay, for whole years together, as was the case during the last war; sometimes again a demand for Slaves was great and pressing. How then was it possible, on every sudden call, to furnish a sufficient return in Slaves, without resorting to those means of obtaining them which had been mentioned, and the very mention of which was sufficient to strike us with horror? He observed there had been three means stated, of procuring Slaves; namely, those of War, Trade, and Crimes supposed to be committed, each of which he would now a little examine the justice of.

Captives in war, it was urged, were in uncivilized countries, commonly doomed to Slavery. This, however, was false in point of fact; and it was so far from being the case in Europe, that it was become a custom (founded on the wisest policy) to pay the captives a peculiar respect and civility—Ought we not to inculcate the same principles in Africa? So far from it, we encouraged wars for the sake of taking, not the man's goods and possessions, but the man himself, *and it was not the war that was the cause of the Slave-Trade, but the Slave-Trade that was the cause of the war.* The practice was, as appeared in evidence,

dence, for the Slave Merchants to carry presents, consisting commonly of spirits, to the African Kings, and when intoxicated with them, then it was that the *royal prerogative* of making war was exercised.—An instance was mentioned, in evidence, of an African Prince, who, when sober, had resisted the wishes of the Slave Merchants; but, in the moment of inebriety, gave the word for war, attacked the next village, inhabited by his own subjects, carried them all off, and sold them to the Slave Merchants.

After dwelling on the enormity of the system of making war in Africa, which was one source of obtaining Slaves; he came next to the second way—of Trade.—This he said was proved, by the most undeniable evidence, to be little more or less than a most shameful and unrestrained system of Kidnapping. He referred the House to various instances of this. He mentioned one case, when the Agent of the Merchants affected to act as Mediator between two contending parties, who, if he might use a pun on so melancholy an occasion, certainly *brought the two parties together*, for he brought them tied back to back to one another, and hurried them both on board a slave-ship.—There was another instance of a considerable Black Slave Merchant, who, after having sold a Girl whom he had kidnapped, was presently after kidnapped and carried away himself; and when he asked the African Captain, in his strange language, “What, take me grand Trader too?” The only answer was, “Yes, we will take you, or her, or any one else, provided any body will sell you to us.” And accordingly both the Trader and the Child were carried off together, to the West Indies.

Mr. Fox then adverted to the third mode of obtaining Slaves; by crimes committed, or supposed to be committed. This had been stated in such a way, that one would think the Slave-Trade was kept up by us, on a sort of friendly principle, and as a necessary part of the *Police* of that country. It was remarkable, that two of the chief crimes which produced convictions, were Adultery and Witchcraft. Was *Adultery* then a crime which we need go to *Africa* to punish? Was *this* the way we took to establish the purity of our National Character? Where

marriage was solemnly instituted, as a religious rite, as it was in this civilized country, he should be sorry to speak lightly of the crime of Adultery. But was *Africa* the place where *Englishmen*, above all men, ought to go in search of Adulterers? Did it become us to use our Saviour's expression, "*To cast the first Stone?*" It was a most extraordinary Pilgrimage, for a most extraordinary purpose! And yet this was one of the chief crimes by which, in that uncivilized country, we justified our right of carrying off it's inhabitants into perpetual Slavery, in the West Indies.—The next crime to this was the supposed one of Witchcraft. We, ourselves, more enlightened than they, were aware that the crime does not really exist; but, instead of humanely trying to dispel their blindness and ignorance, we rather chose, for the sake of the Slave-Trade, to lend ourselves to their superstition, and become the instruments of their blind vengeance. We stand by (said Mr. Fox) we hear the trial, we know the crime to be impossible, and that the accused *must* be innocent; but we wait, in patient silence, for his condemnation, and then we lend our friendly aid to the *Police* of the Country, by buying the wretched Convict, *with all his family*, whom, for the benefit of Africa, we carry away also into perpetual Slavery.

Having spoken of the three ways of obtaining Slaves, Mr. Fox proceeded to the manner of their Transportation. He knew not how to give the House a more correct idea of all the horrors of their situation, when on board, than by referring them to the section of a slave-ship, where the eye might see, what the tongue must fall short in describing. Here he enlarged on the effects of despotic power, in the case of Captains of slave-ships, and on the strange instances of Cruelty, proved in evidence, to have been perpetrated.

They had been thought, by some persons, to be so extravagant, that the term of Infanity had been used; and indeed they were unaccountable, except on the principle that despotic power, by long use, is apt to produce acts of Cruelty, so enormous, that they have been known frequently to assume the appearance of Infanity. Among European Sovereigns, indeed, the mild influence of Religion, Philosophy, and the modern limitations

of Power, had rendered acts of Despotism and Cruelty, far from common; but, among the Emperors of Rome, how many were there who, by the unrestrained use of their power, became so cruel as to be suspected of occasional Insanity, just as many Masters of slave-ships had been.—Who was there that ever read, in the Roman History, the facts recorded of Nero, without suspecting he was mad? Who would not be apt to impute Insanity to that Monster Caligula? Who would not think the same of Domitian? Who would hesitate to pronounce Caracalla insane? Who could otherwise account for the vices of Commodus? Or who could doubt that Heliogabalus was out of his senses. Here were six Roman Emperors, not connected in blood, or by descent, who each of them possessing uncontrolled power, had been so distinguished for cruelty, that nothing short of Insanity could well be imputed to them. He then asked, whether the Insanity of the Masters of slave-ships, might not be suspected to be something of the same species, and might not be accounted for upon much the same principles?

Mr. Fox then proceeded to the situation of the Slaves, when brought to the West Indies. It had been said indeed, that they were taken from a worse state, to a better. The House, he knew, could not wish to hear recitals of Cruelty, nor did he like to dwell upon them. It was their duty, however, in the present case, to open their ears to them, and the House (exclaimed Mr. Fox) *shall* hear them. An Honourable Gentleman before him (Mr. Smith) had quoted some instances, and he would now quote two more. The first was in a French Island; but was declared by witnesses of unimpeachable credit. A Slave, under hard usage, urged by the first impulse of Nature, had run away, and attempted to get his liberty. To prevent his repeating the offence, the Planter sent for his Surgeon, and said to him, “Cut off this man’s leg. The Surgeon, who had more Humanity than his Master, refused. “You refuse (said the Planter) then what you decline, as an act of friendship to me, I will compel you to do, as an act of duty.” Upon this, the Planter *broke* the poor man’s leg. “There now, said he to the Surgeon, you *must* cut off his leg, or the man will die.”—We might console ourselves, perhaps, that this was in a French Island, but

in the English there was no great difference; and the next instance he should state was in an Island of our own. A Gentleman (Mr. Ross, as appeared in evidence) while he was walking along, heard the shrieks of a female, issuing from a barn or outhouse; and as they were much too violent to be excited by any ordinary punishment, he was prompted to go near, and see what could be the matter. On looking in, he perceived a young female, tied up to a beam by her wrists, entirely naked, and in the act of involuntary writhing and swinging, while the author of her torture was standing below her, with a lighted torch in his hand, which he applied to all the parts of her body, as it approached him. What crime this miserable wretch had perpetrated, he knew not; but that was of little consequence, as the human mind could not conceive a crime, in any degree, warranting such a punishment.

By the manner in which the House received this story, Mr. Fox observed to them, that he saw the tale was so horrid, that they could not listen to it without shrinking. Will the House then (said he) sanction enormities, the bare recital of which is sufficient to make them shudder? Let them remember that Humanity consists not in a squeamish ear. It consists not in starting or shrinking at such tales as these, but in a disposition of heart to relieve misery, and to prevent the repetition of cruelty. Humanity, he observed, appertained rather to the mind, than to the nerves; and it would prompt men to use real and disinterested endeavours, to give happiness to their fellow creatures. Here in England such was our indignation at every act of injustice, that a Highwayman, a Pickpocket, or even a Pilferer, was, by law, condemned to death; so jealous were we, in cases where our own property was concerned: but we permitted to go unpunished, *Crimes committed in consequence of the Slave-Trade*, in comparison with which, the criminal practices of England were innocence itself. What was the consequence of this? We unsettled the principles of Justice, in the minds of men, and we deprived the Legislature of that strong influence which it ought to derive from its known integrity, and from its uniform consistency of conduct. It was as important therefore, in sound policy, as it was in point of justice and honour

honour, to abolish a Trade which discredited our Morals and Police at home, as well as our National Character abroad. For what could any man think, either of our justice or consistency, who should see a man that had picked a pocket going to be hanged for the crime, while all the enormities which had been perpetrated in Africa, and all the other cruelties now in evidence before the House, were known not only to pass off with impunity, but while the continuance of them was permitted by a vote of the British Parliament?

It was said, however, that the Africans were less happy at home than in the Islands, and that we were therefore justified in carrying them away; but what right had we to be the judges of this, or to force upon them a new condition? "However unhappy in your opinion (they might say to us) yet we wish for the comforts that are around us, the social relations of life, the liberty of our native, though uncultivated, plains; and you have no right to change, nay even to better, our condition." But it was ridiculous to plead that we *bettered* their condition, when we dragged them from every thing that was dear in life, and reduced them to the most abject state of Slavery.

One argument indeed had been used, by an Honourable Alderman, in the way of commercial policy, which, for a subject so grave, was rather too ridiculous. The Slave-Trade (said the Honourable Alderman) was necessary, on account of the support it gave to our Fisheries, for that the Newfoundland Trade depended on the Slaves, for the consumption of a vast quantity of Refuse Fish, for which there would otherwise be no vent. What was this but to say, That the Slave-Trade must be kept up, with all its enormities, in order that there might be Persons to eat up the refuse fish that was too bad for any body else to eat!!

It had been said, that England ought not to Abolish the Trade, unless France, Spain, and Holland, would also give it up. Mr. Fox said, that, if it was a Trade founded in violence and injustice, Great Britain ought to wash her hands of it, at any rate; nor was the practice of other countries any thing at all to the question. It was as if a person addicted to felony, but now conscious of his past guilt, should say, "There is a man now

whom I have an opportunity of robbing on the highway ; I am extremely sorry to do it, for I am become fully sensible of the guilt, but I know that if *I* should not rob him, there is another highwayman, half a mile farther on the road, who certainly will, and thus *he* will get the man's purse instead of *myself*." Mr. Fox reprobated such reasoning, in terms of manly indignation, observing, that mere Gain was not a motive for a great country to rest on, as a justification of any measure. It was not the first purpose of a well regulated Government : Honour was it's superior, as much as Justice was superior to Honour.

With regard to the Emancipation of the Negroes already in Slavery, his own doubts of the efficacy of an act of the British Legislature for this purpose, was a reason for not entering into it. He himself did not think such a measure could be suddenly ventured upon ; and though every man had a right to freedom, yet it should be observed, that men inured to Slavery all their lives, felt certainly less degraded by it, than those who were born to independence.—It might be dangerous to give freedom at once to a man used to Slavery, on the same ground as, in the case of a man who had never seen day light, there might be danger of blinding him, if you were to expose him all at once to the full glare of the sun.

Mr. Fox condemned exceedingly, the arrogance of the notion, that all the inhabitants of Africa, had minds, inferior to ourselves—How did we know, that such was the case?—Why might there not be men in Africa, of as fine feelings as ourselves, of as enlarged understandings, and as manly in their minds as any of us. He then mentioned the case of an African captain, who heard in the night, some violent groanings, which had caused a disturbance in his ship. There was among his Slaves, one person of very considerable consequence, a man, once high in military station, with a mind, not insensible to the eminence of his rank, who having been taken captive in battle, was sold to the slave-ships, and laid promiscuously with the rest. Happening in the night, to obtain room to stretch his weary limbs, at rather more ease than usual, he had fallen fast asleep, and he dreamed that he was in his own country, high in honour and in command, caressed by his family and friends, waited on by his domestics,

domestics, and surrounded with all his former comforts in life--- when, awaking somewhat suddenly, he found himself fastened down in the hold of a slave-ship, and was heard to burst into loud groans and lamentations on the miserable contrast of his present state, mixed with the meanest of his subjects, and subjected to the insolence of wretches, a thousand times lower than himself, in every kind of endowment. Mr. Fox appealed to the House, whether this was not as moving a picture of the miserable effects of the Slave-Trade, as any that could be imagined. There was one way, and it was an extremely good one, by which any man might come to a judgment on these points--- Let him make the case his own. What, said he, should any one of *us*, who are members of this House, say, and how should we feel if conquered and carried away, by a tribe as savage, as our countrymen on the coast of Africa, shew themselves to be? How should we brook the same indignities, or bear the same treatment ourselves, which we do not scruple to inflict *on them*. Having made this appeal to the feelings of the House, Mr. Fox proceeded to observe, that great stress had been laid on the countenance that was given to Slavery, by the Christian Religion. So far was this from being true, that he thought, one of the most splendid triumphs of Christianity, was, it's having caused Slavery to be so generally abolished, as soon as ever it appeared in the world. One obvious ground on which it did this, was by teaching us, That in the sight of their Maker, all mankind are equal. The same effect might be expected also from the general principles which it taught. It's powerful influence, appeared to have done more in this respect, than all the ancient systems of philosophy; though even in them, in point of theory, we might trace great liberality and consideration for human rights. Where, he said, could be found finer sentiments of liberty, than in the works of Demosthenes and Cicero? Where should we meet with more bold assertions of the rights of mankind, and the dignity of human nature, than in the historians Tacitus and Thucydides? It was remarkable however, that these great men kept Slaves in their houses, and permitted a whole order of Slaves, to exist in their country--- He knew, indeed, that, what he had been ascribing to Christianity

tianity, some imputed to the advances which philosophy had made. Each of the two parties took the merit to itself; the Divine gave it to religion, the Philosopher to philosophy. He should not dispute with either of them; but as both coveted the praise, why should they not emulate each other, in promoting this improvement in the condition of the human race?

Mr. Fox, having drawn his argument, on the general question, to a conclusion, wished, he said, to give an answer to an Honourable Baronet over the way (Sir Archibald Edmondstone) who had asked, What was meant to be done by the Honourable Mover, if the present question for leave to bring in a bill should be carried? Mr. Fox said, that he conceived the intention of the Honourable Mover, undoubtedly was, To bring in a Bill for abolishing the Slave-Trade, *immediately*; but that, the forms of the House made it necessary, the time should be left in blank, and that the blank might be filled up, by naming any period of one, two, three, or four years, as the House might think expedient; so that there was no reason, why the Honourable Baronet, or any other Gentleman, who objected to so immediate an Abolition, should not, in this instance, vote with him. Mr. Fox paid some compliments to the Honourable Gentleman who introduced the motion, saying, that he had fully intended to make a motion, for leave to bring in a bill of the same nature; but that he was extremely happy, it had fallen into better hands. He declared, that the whole country, and indeed, the whole civilized world must rejoice, that such a bill had been moved for, not merely as a matter of humanity, but as an act of mere Justice, and nothing else: for he would put humanity wholly out of the case. He asked, could it be called humanity to forbear from committing murder? Exactly upon this ground did the present motion stand, *being strictly a question of National Justice.*

Mr. Fox observed, it could not be supposed, that he had been induced on the present occasion, to lend his assistance by any personal considerations, and he assured the friends to the Abolition, that, *in whatever situation he might ever be, his warmest efforts should be used in promoting the same cause.*

He

Mr. Fox added, he rejoiced that the Honourable Mover had so strongly pledged himself, to pursue his object till it was accomplished, and he declared, in the most unqualified terms, that the Honourable Gentleman should never find him fail in coming forward to give his best assistance.

The Strangers were ordered to withdraw.

The Gallery being cleared, and a loud cry kept up a considerable time for the question, Mr. J. T. STANLEY, who had been attempting to speak, sat down, and Mr. PITT spoke to order. He said, there might be, and he believed there were, some Gentlemen who could not answer it to themselves, to forbear expressing their opinions on so extraordinary occasion as the present. He hoped, therefore, he should not offend any Gentleman by particularly insisting, that the Bar should be cleared, and that the name of any Gentleman who interrupted the House by his voice should be taken down by the Chairman, as the only means of securing to every Member that undoubted right which he had of delivering his sentiments.

Mr. STANLEY at length rose again, and said, that he came into the House purposing to vote against the Abolition, but that the impression made, both on his understanding and his feelings, was such as he could not resist; and he was now convinced, that the entire Abolition of the Slave-Trade was called for equally by sound policy and justice. He thought it right and fair to avow manfully this change in his opinions, in consequence of what he had heard. The Abolition, he was sure, could not long fail to be carried: the arguments for it were indeed irresistible.

The Honourable Mr. RYDER said, he came to the House, not exactly in the circumstances of the Honourable Gentleman who had just spoken, but very much undecided on the subject; that he, however, was so strongly convinced by the arguments he had heard, that he was become equally earnest for the Abolition, and would most heartily give his Vote for it.

Mr

Mr. SMITH (Member for Pontefract) said, that he should not trouble the House at so late an hour farther than to enter his *protest in the most solemn manner he possibly could, against this Trade which he considered as contrary to Justice, and most disgraceful to the country.*

Sir W. YOUNG declared, he was not convinced by any thing that had passed at all to change his opinion; that he thought his own side of the question was the side of true humanity; and he was as conscientiously convinced of it, as it was possible for any man to be.

Mr. SUMNER declared himself against the total, immediate, and unqualified Abolition, which he thought would wound at least the prejudices of the West Indians, and might do mischief, but a gradual Abolition, he said, he should much wish to see.

Major SCOTT declared he could not possibly give a silent vote on so momentous a question, and particularly after what had been said of those who should dissent from the Motion. He declared there was no Member in the House who could give a more independent and honest vote upon the question than himself. He had no sort of concern either in the African or West India Trade, farther than an acquaintance with many very respectable West India Merchants, which could not possibly bias his judgment. He said, that he had read the evidence with the utmost care, and had heard all that had been said upon it; but in the present alarming state of the Finances of this Country, he was clearly of opinion that it would be a most dangerous experiment indeed, to risque any one part of our foreign commerce. As far as regulation could go, he would most heartily join, and was confident that the enquiries of the Hon. Gentleman (Mr. Wilberforce) had produced many very beneficial effects; but a total and immediate Abolition of the Slave-Trade

Trade, struck him as a very dangerous experiment. Let the Trade be regulated, and as population increased in the West Indies, the African Trade would abolish itself.

Mr. BURKE said, that he had for a long time had his mind drawn to the Slave Trade; that he had even prepared some measures for it's regulation, conceiving the immediate Abolition of it (though highly desirable) to be then hardly a thing that could be hoped for; but when he found the Honourable Mover was bringing forward the present question, which he approved much more than his own, he had burnt his papers, and made an offering of them, in honour of the proposition of the Honourable Gentleman, much in the same manner as we read, that the curious books were offered up and burnt at the approach of the Gospel. He rejoiced at the submission to reason and argument which Gentlemen, who came in with minds somewhat prejudiced, had avowed on that day. They thereby told their constituents, as they ought to tell them, that it was impossible for them, if sent to hear discussion in the House of Commons, to avoid surrendering up their hearts and judgments to the cause in question, however they might have been taught before-hand to come prejudiced against it.

Mr. DRAKE spoke strongly against the Abolition. He came into the House, he said, with an unimpassioned vacancy of head and heart, but with all his might he would oppose the question. We had, by want of temperance and of prudent conduct, lost America. He said the House should beware of being carried away by the meteors they had been dazzled with. The Leaders, it was true, were for the Abolition; but the minor orators, the dwarfs, the pigmies, he trusted, would that day carry the question against them. The property of the West Indians was at stake, and though men might be generous of their own property, they should not be so with the property of others.

Lord SHEFFIELD, in strong terms, reprobated the overbearing language that had been used by some Gentlemen, towards others who differed in opinion from them on a matter of so great difficulty and so much doubt as this, and said it was not the way to convince him. He protested against a debate in which he could trace nothing like reason, but on the contrary downright phrenzy, raised perhaps by the most extraordinary eloquence; yet he was satisfied he could at any other time demonstrate that the Abolition, as proposed, was impracticable, and that the attempt would be productive of the greatest mischief. He denied the right of the British Legislature to pass such a law. He turned to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and warned him, that the day on which the Bill should pass into a law, would be the worst he had ever seen. It would hamper him more than his Spanish or Russian War, or a War with all Europe, in as much as a Civil War was more terrible than all other Wars.

Mr. MILNES declared, that he adopted all those expressions against the Slave-Trade which were thought so harsh by the Noble Lord; and insinuated that his opinion had been turned by his being Member for Bristol. He quoted a passage from Lord Sheffield's Pamphlet, and insisted, that the separation of families, there complained of by the Noble Lord, ought to affect his mind as a crying evil in the West Indies, as well as in Africa, and that he ought, on his own grounds, as stated in his Pamphlet, to take the contrary side of the question.

Lord SHEFFIELD replied, that his opinion had always been the same, and that the Honourable Gentleman misunderstood what he had been reading. He wished the condition of the Negroes in the West Indies to be meljorated as much as any man, but to be done with justice and good sense; and through the medium of the West India Assemblies, who alone could do it.

Mr. WILBERFORCE made a short reply to some arguments used in the course of the debate, and at half past three o'clock the House divided.

NOES	—	—	163
AYES	—	—	88
Majority against the Abolition			<u>75</u>

ERRATUM.

Page 63, line 13, from the top, after "and" insert "in consequence of."

Some minute Errata besides may have escaped detection; but none, it is hoped, that can mar the sense, or which the reader himself may not easily correct.

TABLE OF REFERENCE.

Mr. WILBERFORCE	-	-	-	Page	1, 123
Col. TARLETON	-	-	-		42, 59, 60
Mr. GROSVENOR	-	-	-		47
Mr. J. MARTIN	-	-	-		48
Mr. BURDON	-	-	-		56
Mr. FRANCIS	-	-	-		57
Mr. PITT	-	-	-		58, 60, 94,
Mr. CAWTHORNE	-	-	-		59
Col. PHIPPS	-	-	-		59, 60, 93
Mr. FOX	-	-	-		59, 104
Lord CARHAMPTON	-	-	-		60
Sir W. YOUNG	-	-	-		61, 92, 120
Mr. M. MONTAGU	-	-	-		67
Lord J. RUSSELL	-	-	-		ib.
Mr. J. STANLEY (Agent)	-	-	-		68
Mr. W. SMITH	-	-	-		70
Mr. COURTENAY	-	-	-		90
Lord CARYSFORT	-	-	-		92
Sir ARCHIBALD EDMONDSTONE	-	-	-		103
Mr. Alderman WATSON	-	-	-		104
Mr. J. T. STANLEY	-	-	-		119
Hon. Mr. RYDER	-	-	-		ib.
Mr. SMITH (Pontefract)	-	-	-		120
Mr. SUMNER	-	-	-		ib.
Major SCOTT	-	-	-		ib.
Mr. BURKE	-	-	-		121
Mr. DRAKE	-	-	-		ib.
Lord SHEFFIELD	-	-	-		122
Mr. MILNES	-	-	-		ib.